



REINCARNATOR

BOOK 04

Alla

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Reincarnator

(환생작)

by

ALLA

Synopsis

Humanity has been gradually transported to the Abyss by a bored god to compete against other races and monsters.

Problem is... Humanity failed.

In a last desperate push the strongest survivors chose a comrade to travel as far as possible back in time.

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Season 2 - Demon King's Tower

Chapter 301 : The World After 2 Years (1)

In the past, when they had been heading towards the Time Dimensional Crystal.

Eres had asked me something.

What was the first thing I would do when I returned to the past?

What did I regret the most?

And I replied instinctively.

The thing I regretted about the most deep inside my mind.

<I shouldn't have killed those bastards back then. Even though they were like demons...I needed to keep them alive.> And I remember her face.

A face of deep contemplation while looking at me.

As well as Kangtae and Keldian.

Maybe this was why you sealed by memories before sending me into the past.

Since I needed to be the humankind's savior according to Eres.

But I do not think I am wrong.

In the end.

What this world needs is not a savior.

It's a Demon King.

King of the Demons.

So once I leave this egg...

.....

Rummmble.

Below the half-destroyed mountain range.

Four people were running through the blizzard.

“Fuck! Don’t slow down!”

“Keep using the scans and don’t stop looking around!”

Though the might of their skills showed how strong they were, none of them looked the slightest proud.

Their expressions only showed hurry.

Rumble.

After a bit of running, a red light exploded out from one of the 2 pairs of males and females.

Kiiiiing!

As the girl felt nothing being caught in the red light that swept around their surroundings, she shouted at her comrades in relief.

“Phew! Slow down! They aren’t following us anymore!”

The three people cursed out loud as they stopped.

“Fucking... Haaa. Are they really gone?”

“Fucking Dakramas.”

The 4 sat down on the spot while cursing out at the Abyssal race, the Dakramas.

‘Fuck. We’ve come too far. Really far. Damn... For us to become like this the moment we come up from the 3rd zone to the 4th.’

Taesang, the temporary leader of this small group, frowned as he checked his surroundings.

A mountain range covered in snow and blizzard.

Though parts of the mountain range had been destroyed, the 2 years of blizzard did a very good job of hiding a lot of the damage.

Apparently a huge explosion had occurred here 2 years ago.

The Green Zone of the past.

A huge explosion which shook this entire place, which was now called for the 4th zone.

And the change that came afterwards.

That day was named the <Day of change>.

The day when the steel pillars smashed through the ceilings of the 7 zones and landed.

The Seven Zones had changed a lot.

To some, it was a very welcome change.

And to some, to newcomers like them, a very unfortunate change.

‘For this huge chaos... To have been caused by one person.’

Kang Hansoo.

Taesang looked around as he thought of the legendary name that evoked both good and bad meanings.

A girl standing next to Taesang spoke in dejection.

“...I want to eat pork belly.”

“Dumb bitch. Get used to it. We’ve been in this bloody world for over a year already.”

Taesang looked at the girl, Misun, and scolded her.

Though it wasn’t a long time to adapt, there was nothing else they could do.

They needed to adapt in order to survive.

‘Damn. We were the best back in the 3rd zone.’

From the 1st zone to the 3rd which were respectively called Red, Orange and Yellow Zones in the past.

They had charged through with their friends.

But the 4th zone.

The Green Zone.

This world, created by the man called Kang Hansoo, was the

materialization of hell.

‘Kang Hansoo...’

While Taesang was thinking about this name.

One of the females, the one who had sent out the red light just before, called out to him and the others.

“Yo guys... Do you guys know what this is?”

“What is it?”

The adventurers approached her and looked at the thing she was pointing at.

“...What the fuck?”

Past the horizon.

There was a huge hole in the middle of the broken down mountain range.

As if it had been hit by a meteor.

And within this huge hole.

There was a round, silvery object.

‘...Egg? What the hell?’

They frowned as they looked at the silvery egg in the center of this hole.

And there was another thing.

There was a small box next to this egg.

A small box the size of a pencil case.

‘Hmm...Weird.’

These two things should not be in the middle of nowhere like this.

This place wasn’t within the territory of the humans.

Taesang turned his gaze away from the strange egg and the box

and spoke to Lauren.

“Can you feel anything?”

The scout, Lauren, shook her head.

They could only barely find the location of the egg with the skill, they had no way of finding out what was within it.

The mysterious egg was doing a great job of separating what was inside it from the outside world, including shielding the powers of the skills.

‘It was lucky to find it as well.’

Lauren mumbled as she looked at the egg in the center of the huge remnant of an explosion.

Actually she was feeling uneasy standing here.

‘I can feel traces of a tremendously powerful being.’

Though most of the traces had been covered by the snow, she could still feel it.

The power that swept through the surroundings.

And if some power hadn’t destroyed the mountains, people like them wouldn’t even have been able to approach this egg.

‘Apparently nobody has come all the way to this place yet.’

Though they had come all the way to this location by coincidence, it was still within the territory of the Dakramas.

A stay-away zone for them.

‘Perhaps... He’s a transcendent?’

A completely different existence from them.

A small amount of monstrous beings who had been born after the Abyss descended.

‘No way.’

As Lauren made a expression full of disbelief, Taesang continued

to frown.

“Mmm...”

If this originated from the Abyss then the first steps in handling it would be extremely important.

Since the 2nd floor of the 4th zone, which had ignored the mysterious object from the Abyss at first, had now become a land of death. (TN: I guess there's 2 floors of each zones now? Not enough information on this to clarify.) Since that specific mysterious object was the infected host of the Abyssal Race, the Aroels.

‘Should we take it back?’

The moment Taesang put his hand on the egg.

Paaaajaaajaak!

“Uaaaaak!”

Taesang freaked out.

His energy was furiously being sucked into the egg.

‘Fuck...I can't take my hand off!’

As he was freaking out.

Boooom!

Misun figured something was wrong and kicked him far into the corner and away from the egg.

“Kuhuk!....Fucking bitch! Kick more softly!”

“What the hell are you saying? I just saved you.”

Misun turned back to the egg in fear.

She had also been in danger for a short moment her own energy got sucked into the egg the moment she kicked Taesang.

Though she didn't know what was inside that egg, it was clear that it was extremely dangerous.

Even if they used skills on it, it would probably absorb the skills' energy.

Misun spoke to Taesang who was walking back while complaining quietly.

“Yo, let’s just go. Ignore this.”

“Just go?”

“Yeah, we have no time to mess around like this either. It’s not like we completely escaped them anyway.”

Taesang pondered for a moment but then nodded.

‘Yeah... We have no time to waste.’

The egg didn’t feel safe and they didn’t have any time to play around here.

But they couldn’t just leave.

‘If the egg’s a no go then at least that box...’

Taesang put his hand on the box.

Thankfully, it didn’t suck in his energy or anything.

‘Let’s try opening it.’

Taesang picked up the box and tried to open it.

But it was useless, despite his strength which could even pry apart a car.

‘...It’s not opening?’

Kuududuuk.

The small box seemed to not care about Taesang’s strength at all as it remained unmoved.

He even used the reinforcement given to him by a high ranker in the 1st zone, the <Scarlet Sun Reinforcement> but the box remained the same.

‘...I guess I’ll just have to take it.’

Though it was hard for them here, someone stronger than them existed back in the base.

‘Well, at least we got something.’

“Let’s go back.”

Since they memorized the coordinates, they could return at any time.

It was time to leave.

Lauren nodded and the 4 people quickly disappeared into the snow.

And near the spot where the box was, only the mysterious egg remained behind and slowly disappeared under the snow.

At that moment.

Kwadddduduk!

A hang broke through the egg.

Crack.

Craaaacck.

As the egg broke apart.

The silvery egg turned into liquid as it started to get sucked back into the man.

And soon.

A man walked out.

A thin but lean body.

Crunch.

Crackle.

‘...I’ve come out a bit earlier than expected huh.’

The man, Kang Hansoo, examined his body which seemed to have shrunk a bit as he mumbled.

He thought that he would have to absorb the energy for about another week but thanks to a small burst of excess energy, he had been able to come out faster.

‘Anyways... Who was it?’

Hansoo frowned as he looked around.

He wasn’t talking about the people who had just been here.

A bit before that.

Hansoo thought back to the words he had heard while being inside the egg.

<Kang Hansoo. Sigh... I can’t believe you’ve become like this. Phew.. .Unbelievable... I’ll put... In the box so open it when you come out.> ‘It’s not here.’

Hansoo looked at the ground.

‘Look at these brats.’

He could still see the footprints of the four people.

Chapter 302 : The World After 2 Years (2)

A man was dashing through the plains.

‘They went further than I thought.’

It seems they had already run far while Hansoo had been coming out from the egg.

Despite having chased them for quite a while, he could not feel their presence at all.

Of course it wasn't like he was upset or anything.

Since the distance between them was clearly getting shorter from the footprints.

And the air that he hadn't tasted for such a long time felt really great as well.

Whooosh.

Hansoo breathed in deeply as he chased the footprints.

It was cold enough to freeze the entire body of a normal person but it was just very cool to Hansoo.

He felt like he breathing in a breath of cool, refreshing morning air.

Hansoo smiled as he chased after the footprints.

Sensations he couldn't feel for the past 2 years.

He had thought that he had grown used to being isolated as he was constantly fighting with a small group of elites or by himself but being fully conscious in a place where there was nobody else for 2 whole years was truly a different sensation.

2 whole years in which he could not do anything, see anything or get in contact with anybody.

He had thought that it would be a calm vacation but it was more of a torture than fighting everyday.

‘...I guess a person needs to do things they are good at.’

Tatatatak!

Hansoo continued to mumble as he kept chasing after the footprints while not leaving behind a single footprint due to his now much lighter body.

The time he had been inside the egg was so torturous that the sound he had heard in the midst of it sounded like the voice of an angel.

Of course he couldn’t find out who it was.

Not even if it was a male or female.

He didn’t know if they were friendly or were an enemy.

Whether they were sad for him or looking down on him.

The single line that they left behind.

He didn’t know who it was and what they had actually left behind.

But one thing was clear.

‘That person was not just anyone.’

A power that destroyed the entire mountain around him just to get to the egg he was in.

That strength was something even Hansoo, who was inside the egg at the time.

Hansoo smiled again.

‘Good. Very good.’

2 years.

It was not a long period of time.

But in order to get stronger and throw everything away to achieve that, it was more than enough time.

Even more so if that person was already powerful or had a lot of

potential.

The Abyss was a place best suited for people like that.

A world made to create monsters.

He had been worried that there might only be weaklings because they were fighting with each other but it seemed there was a person who had reached the ceiling already.

‘I should go find that person.’

It seemed like it would be hard to find the person but thankfully they had kindly left behind a clue.

As if the person wanted to talk to himself.

He chased after the invitation letter that the person had left behind.

The four who had taken his invitation to be exact.

And there was only a single emotion inside him.

Curiosity.

The 2 years during which he had been isolated.

How had the world changed?

When the Abyss fell down upon them in the past, the Otherworld and the Abyss had both completely broken down.

But thanks to him controlling the amount of information he let out, the Otherworld hadn't completely broken down this time.

Which meant that the people had a bit of buffer.

Thought he difficulty would've been much higher than in the past, the humans had become unbelievably stronger than they had been in the past.

Since he had set up the Red, Orange and Yellow zones in such a way that they would constantly create powerful soldiers.

The danger rose and the humans grew stronger.

But Hansoo could only guess, he couldn't know for sure how this world had changed.

Since there were too many variables for anyone to predict the future accurately.

‘Well, time to check.’

As Hansoo was about to continue after the footprints after he had looked at the steel elevator in the distance.

Rumble.

From the distance.

Hansoo felt something within this senses that had spread far and wide.

And the moment he sensed this.

Hansoo frowned.

‘How fast.’

He was feeling it more and more.

If the humans were alive then there should be some form of signal in the sky, like a flare or something.

No, there should at least be a trace.

But even after so long, there was only a vast plain.

As if everything had died.

Which meant one thing.

‘They’ve been pushed back huh.’

He didn't know what was going on in the other places.

Since once the elevators descended, the worlds would get shredded apart.

The elevators were a supernatural structure that separated the worlds into different floors.

The different floors would become completely separated and house a society and a world of their own.

But one thing was clear regarding the 1st floor of the the Green Zone.

The humans weren't the only owners of this place.

Squirm.

Hansoo felt something in the edges of his field of perception.

Something that he couldn't fully make out despite his greatly improved senses.

He could only sense that something was approaching him.

But if the ground was shaking this much despite him not being able to sense it... It only meant one thing.

'It's a race that is self-ruled. Right from the get-go... I guess they really got pushed back far.'

The races that were self-ruled were hard to deal with unless one knew how to deal with each different kind properly.

But on the other hand, their weakness was known then it was much easier to deal with than a race with a normal hierarchy.

This was why information was the most valuable thing to humans, this was why the first thing Hansoo had told the adventurers was the method to deal with these self-ruled races.

It shouldn't be hard to deal with them but from seeing these things being everywhere and going after the adventurers... It meant that the humans had been pushed back really far.

'What the hell caused all of this?'

He had given them specific orders to deal with this but it seemed something unexpected had happened.

These self-ruled race types were almost impossible to detect or sense.

They could only check with their eyes.

And he couldn't just leave before seeing it with his own eyes.

Since some of them would chase after people in order to kill them even if it took an eternity to do so.

If someone didn't want to deal with an entire race because they escaped from one member, then they would need to deal with them properly in the first place.

Rumble.

Squirm.

Hansoo finally could see what the creature was as it approached him.

Shshshshshsh.

Past the snow covered plains.

And sometimes through the blizzard.

A 2 dimensional being approaching like a shadow.

'Dakramas.'

Creatures that hid between the dimensions and hunted other race by assimilating them into their own dimension.

They hid if they were being attacked.

If the enemy escaped then they would come out to attack or drag them into their own dimension.

But Hansoo was disappointed.

'They got pushed back by these guys?'

Of course they were indeed a hassle to deal with.

But there was a clear cut method to deal with them.

The Rebanol Scales that one could acquire after killing the common hierarchy race Rebanols.

Weapons applied with ground scales of Rebanols, a race that evolved to hunt Dakramas, could easily penetrate through the pocket dimensions they were hiding in.

They were easy pickings after that, a few stabs and they were easily dealt with.

This wasn't the only method.

The Beynol race, the race that the Dakramas predated on.

If the scent sacs underneath their wings were taken and lit on fire, a red light would explode out that would cause the senses of the Dakramas to become greatly hindered.

A defensive mechanism the Beynol race had developed.

But there was no way for Hansoo, who had just woken up, to get the Rebanol Scales or the scent sacs of the Beynols.

'They're really swarming this place. I guess I'll just deal with them here...'

It wasn't impossible.

Just annoying.

Crunch.

As Hansoo poured his strength into the Forked Lightning.

Piiiiing!

In the distance.

Something flew towards him attached to an arrow.

'...That?'

As Hansoo frowned at the red capsule on the tip of the arrow.

A powerful red light exploded out from the sudden red light.

Boom!

The moment the surrounding shadows got swept by the red light.

Shhhhhhhhhk!

Shaaaaak!

The shadows that were quickly approaching them seemed to have been extremely shocked as they started to jump around in multiple directions.

Like their five senses had been disturbed.

And Hansoo knew what caused this light.

‘Beynol’s Powder.’

As Hansoo turned his head towards where the arrow had come from.

“Hey! Run!”

“God! I told you we should just leave him alone! You crazy bastard of a captain!”

In the distance.

He could see the two males and two females shouting at him.

‘The ones I was chasing... Why are they here?’

According to his calculations, they should be much further ahead and even if they did remain behind due to something, there was no reason for them to save him.

The Beynol’s Powder was not a complete solution to the Dakramas, they might be killed as well.

And as he expected.

“Uaaa!”

“Bastards! Just wait right there!”

The Dakramas who were a bit further away and had taken less of an impact from the red light started to charge towards Hansoo to deal with him first.

And the group that shot the arrow started to quickly run away.

‘Hmm. They should know that they could get swept into the fight.’

People who carried around the Beynol’s Powders should definitely know this.

The group who had started to run away looked at Hansoo for a bit and then quickly moved away.

.....

A few moments later.

In a cave a bit away.

The group of four people started to breathe roughly.

“Haaa...”

“Fuck! Crazy maniac! Are you a superhero or something? Don’t just go around saving anybody!”

The girl named Misun shouted towards the man named Taesang.

And in the distance.

Tatatak.

‘...Anybody? Feisty huh.’

Hansoo chuckled at the words of the girl inside the cave.

It was quite a funny sight to behold after just coming out from a situation where they could’ve died.

But Hansoo didn’t laugh at them.

He knew that they were quite capable.

‘Good ability. Good coping methods.’

Though they were screaming, they had made sure to block sounds from escaping as well as covering up where they were hiding.

They were bickering only after they had created a safe hideout.

A normal adventurer or some random monster wouldn't even know that these four would be inside this cave.

And though they had saved him, they had erased all the traces on the way to the cave.

‘They are wary of me huh.’

Though being wary was one thing, it seems they couldn't let see him die.

Hansoo came to a decision.

‘The box first.’

Then.

Whooosh.

Hansoo quickly headed towards the four people within the cave.

Chapter 303 : Transcendent (1)

It was important to keep some cards hidden in order to survive in this world.

One couldn't show everything at once.

.....

“Phew. What are you going to do now?”

Misun stopped shouting and asked.

He was still the leader.

He chose the direction they went.

‘Hmm.’

Taesang thought for a moment about the mysterious man from before and then replied.

“It's time to go back.”

Lauren then asked.

“The man from before? Will that be enough?”

Though they had shot an arrow to help him, it wouldn't be close to enough.

She didn't know how he had been abandoned in these plains by himself but a human being would not be able to survive long without enough Beynol powder.

‘Fucking hell.’

As Misun made a worried expression.

Taesang shook his head and replied.

“No. I'm not going to care about him anymore.”

“...You aren't?”

Of course it was the smart thing to do to ignore a stranger in a

dangerous situation like this.

But the Taesang they knew thought a bit differently from others.

And as he received strange looks from the others.

Taesang smiled bitterly.

“He probably wouldn’t need our help.”

Just as they shot the arrow flying.

He saw the man’s smile.

A face full of leisure.

He realized that what he had been thinking was not correct.

And the moment the man looked towards himself.

He was even more sure of it.

An expression full of curiosity.

Though he had always thought that his decisions were always correct, he regretted his action the moment he saw that mysterious man’s expression.

He had helped the man and piqued his interest.

‘Dangerous.’

From his experience, if a man looked at him with great curiosity then he should be very wary of that man.

Curiosity meant that the man didn’t know much about him.

A human should be wary of mysterious things.

But the man wasn’t on guard against himself at all.

Which meant that he was confident.

He wasn’t running away from the Dakramas, he was running away from that man.

Taesang looked around him and spoke out.

“We put out the fire for now so we’ll stand by for about an hour

and then move out. Everyone cool down the overload on your mana pools and double check the Beynol powder.”

“...Fuck. He must be dangerous as hell then.”

An hour was not a short period of time in the plains swarming with Dakramas.

A whole hour to see if the man could survive or not, this proved how highly he thought of the man.

Misun complained but eventually nodded.

But at that moment.

Lauren’s expression froze.

“Ah...”

As she started to speak.

Riiiiiiiiiiiiip!

The sound of something ripping was heard from outside the cave.

And Taesang cursed the moment he heard this noise.

“Fuck!”

Then.

“Nice to meet you again. Thank you for the assistance just now.”

Hansoo walked into the cave after he destroyed the barrier outside the cave.

And the moment the group of four saw this.

“Ah... Fucking hell.”

The tremendous pressure that had started to bore down upon them the moment the barrier ripped apart.

The slight pain on their skin was telling them.

‘I can’t win.’

Their body instincts were shouting at them.

Misun grinded her teeth.

‘Fucking bastard. Why wasn’t he letting out this aura just before?’

Misun cursed inwardly as she realized that Hansoo was suppressing his own strength in order to catch them.

If they knew he was like this then they would’ve never approached him.

A powerful person was someone dangerous even if they were close with them.

Like how a zookeeper would still be wary of a lion even if they had raised it from birth.

But if a stranger was that powerful, they were dangerous beyond reason.

‘Where the hell did this guy pop out from...’

The four kept their guard up.

They couldn’t just die standing still.

Kiiiiing!

As lights of various colors exploded out from their bodies.

The man who had appeared before their eyes spoke.

“Don’t be so on guard against me. I’m not trying to hurt you.”

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders.

His words were true.

‘I like how they helped me despite the danger.’

Them taking the box was a problem but it wasn’t like there was an owner or like it would take a long time to catch up to them.

‘It’s nice that I don’t have to beat the hell out of people the moment I come out.’

It was nice since there was a mountain of people he would need

to beat up, starting out like this was good.

He smiled at Taesang, who seemed to be the leader behind all this, and spoke.

“The box you took before? Give me that.”

“...You’re the owner?”

“Mmm... I’m not the owner but it was given to me.”

Hansoo nodded at Misun who dared to speak to him in a situation like this.

This girl reminded him of somebody.

‘Saying whatever she has on her mind, reminds me of Enbi Arin.’

A normal person would be scared out of their wits but this girl was staring right back at him.

Anyways, he just needed to get the box from these guys.

Since his plans only included the transcendents and not these normal beings.

And if he could hear how the world had changed, it would be perfect.

‘It would go smoothly, at least I hope.’

At that moment.

“Mmm...”

“Uh...”

Hansoo frowned.

‘...During that short moment?’

Hansoo didn’t realize these guys were this capable.

But his worries came true.

“That... We sent it away already. To the main base...”

“Ha...”

Hansoo sighed deeply.

.....

After the Abyss opened.

The world became filled up with mysteries.

Though the man called Kang Hansoo had told them a few things, the things that came out from the elevators far surpassed their knowledge.

Of course the information Hansoo gave them was precious beyond reason.

He had left behind instructions on how to tame the <Fliers> as well as the method to deal with the most dangerous and strangest creatures.

‘He should’ve been called a savior from just this...’

Taesang mumbled inwardly.

Anyways.

Though they had been able to put out the most urgent flames, the elevators kept spewing out strange and mysterious creatures.

And they spread out over the entire world.

Due to the increasing amount of casualties when attacking these races without any knowledge, an unspoken rule started to appear among the adventurers.

<If you find the traces or pieces of something unknown, the scouts will make a decision. If they cannot solve it by themselves then there are two solutions.> First, if they cannot bring the trace or pieces back then memorize the coordinates and report it.

Second, if they can bring it then immediately send it over using the <Fliers>, an abyssal race that resembled a blue bird, to the headquarters.

They couldn’t make sure that they wouldn’t get killed on the way

there anyway.

The egg belonged to the former while the mysterious box belonged to the latter.

‘...Seeing as they have a proper societal system, it seems the survivors are doing well.’

Though it wasn’t bad up to this point, it became annoying that he had to do more work.

“So you’re saying the box is at the main base.”

“...”

Taesang carefully nodded.

Though the man didn’t get annoyed or called out their mistakes, the silence was even more terrifying.

But Hansoo only pondered for a bit and then got up.

“Take me there.”

“Huh?”

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders.

“Why are you so shocked? I need to get it back right?”

There was no guarantee that these guys would bring it back so he would need to go personally.

And it wasn’t that bad either.

Since it would be safer in the main base than with these guys.

The <Fliers> would make sure the object was delivered and it would be safely stored inside the main base.

‘I’m a bit curious about how people are living as well.’

Two birds with one stone.

But Lauren clenched her teeth.

This man was too mysterious.

And she was not in the situation to ask.

Even if she did, a proper answer might not be given.

But taking this man to the main base?

‘...If this is the plan of the Dark King then we’re all dead.’

It was better to just finish it all here than taking him there.

She was fed up of her friends being hunted down by the Dark King.

‘Fucking... Monster.’

But as Lauren was about to speak.

Clench.

Taesang grasped her hand tightly..

“...?”

A powerful grip, as if he was stopping her.

And Lauren was shocked at this.

‘...Taesang.’

Lauren fell into silence.

While looking at the terrified expression of Taesang, a clicking noise was created from Taesang’s hands discreetly.

A morse code created by muscles during emergencies.

And she knew what he was telling her.

‘You want to listen to him...?’

As Lauren looked at Taesang.

Taesang’s eyes were fixated on something else instead of her.

At the tip of the mysterious man’s hands.

Whooooosh.

Something dark red.

The aura the man was letting out was powerful but not quite dangerous in any way.

But this was different.

It sent chills down their entire back and made their souls scream in fear.

“I actually made this for the bad boys, not people like you.”

Then.

Taesang’s expression froze up as he saw the dark red light slowly brighten up.

Chapter 304 : Transcendent (2)

From the day he had come to the 4th zone from the 3rd zone.

He had always thought to himself.

Do I have the right to lead these people?

I am afraid.

One day if I make a single, wrong choice.

Everybody could get killed.

.....

‘I guess...This is the moment.’

Taesang thought of the question he had been pondering over all the way until now.

His entire body was shouting at him.

Do. Not. Resist.

The moment he did, the man would use that thing on his hand.

Without a single bit of hesitation.

‘I have made 2 mistakes until now.’

First, taking the box.

Second, helping this man.

Well, it wasn't a mistake really.

Since there was nothing wrong with his choice nor anything strange.

But the result was unequivocal.

His decisions, brought them a terrifying monster.

There was no reason to make a third mistake.

“Yes, I will lead you.”

Taesang walked ahead of his comrades and Hansoo smiled at Taesang.

“Yes. Good. This is pretty good for you guys as well, don’t worry.”

Though it seemed like he had become the bad guy here, it was still a good deal for them.

Since they can cross the plains swarming with Dakramas with him around.

‘And...’

If they were worried about their main base, it meant that there was somebody aiming for it.

And the fact they were on guard against a human like him meant that the target was also a human.

Hansoo continued to stare at Taesang who was squirming his fingers around.

Tiing.

Ssssk.

With every movement of the finger, a tiny and miniscule shockwave spread out.

A method of communication.

“Dark King?”

“..!!!!”

Taesang freaked out at the words from the man.

‘...He read the shockwaves?’

It was something that was impossible without a cheat sheet of some sort.

Hansoo spoke as he stared at Taesang who was looking at him in fear and shock.

“There’s no time so let’s talk while we move. There’s a lot I want to ask.”

The past 2 years.

He was curious as to how it changed.

How the road from the 1st to the 3rd zone, which his past self had painstakingly set up, had changed.

And how the 4th zone and above had changed as well.

‘I could just ask the ones through the Soul Fragment but...’

There’s still a lot of restrictions so he didn’t want to waste it on just these simple questions.

And at those words.

‘...What the hell is he? Why doesn’t he know this?’

Taesang and the others were confused.

.....

The world had changed a lot because of Hansoo.

And in between the lower Red, Orange, Yellow zones and the upper Blue, Indigo, Violet Zones, there was the Green zone.

The Green zone of the past, which was the 4th zone now, was much different than the floors below and above as it was the center.

“Since you tell me that you’re a member from before the Great Change, you wouldn’t know anything about the floors below huh. And you tell us that you have A.M.N.E.S.I.A.”

Misun emphasized the amnesia part after having been almost killed just before.

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders.

“Yeah, I don’t remember anything so it would be great if you guys can explain it to me in detail.”

And Misun grinded her teeth at Hansoo's attitude.

'Fucking bastard.'

But Misun and the other three knew.

That they had to follow this man's orders.

'There's nothing we can do.'

This guy was just too damn strong.

But at that moment.

"Careful...!"

Lauren, who had been running as fast as she could, suddenly cried out.

Then.

Boooooooooom!

Something exploded out from beneath the ground.

And Misun freaked out.

'...Kang-Kion!'

Misun hurriedly raised her blade at the 2m large hunting dog which had jumped out from the ground to bite her head off.

This was one of the greatest changes the opening of the Abyss had brought.

The Abyssal races had been fully released.

And these monsters were one of the two greatest factors that changed the humankind.

Monsters that were hard to deal with the basic logic they had.

Look.

Lauren's perception was powerful enough to scan around a radius of numerous kilometers.

But because of the assimilation of the lands, she could not detect

the Kang-Kion which moved underground.

This monster didn't have a physical body.

It simply phased through the ground beneath as a form of spirit and then used the surrounding materials to create a body when needed.

And even Lauren couldn't detect it until it got within 10m of her.

'Fucking... How did they come all the way here!'

Misun grinded her teeth at the rough breath of the monster on her face.

But that was it.

Misun wasn't afraid in the slightest despite being seconds away from her neck being ripped apart.

She knew what would happen next.

And as she expected.

Crunch!

Something shot out from the space between her neck and shoulder and stabbed into the monster in front of her.

Rooooaarr!

The Kang-Kion, which had formed itself from dirt and ice, disappeared into powder.

This thing was not something that died this easily.

It wasn't just some random dirt and ice.

The dirt and ice that the Kang-Kion had formed its body with was countless times stronger than even the special weapons from the floor below.

But somehow, this thing had been killed in just a single strike.

'Who the hell is he?'

But Misun shook her head.

Whether he had amnesia or not, it just meant that he didn't want to talk about himself.

And since he was safeguarding them back to the main base, there was nothing to lose from not asking.

Clank.

As Hansoo withdrew his spear, something made a clanking noise and fell on the ground.

And Misun's eyes shone at this.

'Abyssal Crystal.'

The Abyssal Crystal.

The single object that the new Abyssal Race gave them.

But Hansoo merely picked up the crystal and threw it to Misun.

As if he didn't care about it.

"Well, take it as a form of payment for the information. Continue."

Money always talked.

Misun stopped for a second but soon nodded as she took the crystal.

'...We really need this for the main base as well. There's nothing to lose from this, this is an equivalent exchange.'

"I'll continue."

.....

From the 1st to the 3rd zone.

These zones had been surprisingly successful in defending against the invaders of the Abyss.

And not just successful, they had done it perfectly.

The 1st, 2nd and 3rd zones were different.

The 1st zone had the World Tree which supplied them with vast amounts of mana.

The 2nd zone had the Akadus which managed the humans as well as the Akarons.

Same for the 3rd zone.

The 3rd zones had had the legacy weapons of the past, the Satellite Fortresses.

But just this wouldn't have been enough.

The Abyssal Race from the elevators couldn't be dealt with just pure strength.

But the information that Hansoo had given them before he left had filled the gaps.

And because of this.

The 21st and 22nd year rookies who had just come up had been able to climb through the zones in relative safety despite having to fight the beings from the Abyss every day.

And they were the clear example of this.

"We haven't even been here for 2 years. Well, the reason why we had been able to come this far was thanks to a man called Kang Hansoo."

"Hmm."

Hansoo was shocked at the four in front of him.

For them to be barely 2 years old.

'I didn't waste my strength huh.'

Hansoo smiled contently.

Before, it would've taken 9 years to get to the Green zone on average and maybe 6 or 7 years if they were fast.

But thanks to his setup, these people had been able to climb up

here this quickly.

The reason why it took so long to climb up was largely attributed to things like the Five Calamities or the Gragos as well as the other humans who would constantly backstab them.

Since he had gotten rid of all this as well as giving them benefits such as the World Tree, they just had to gather runes to climb up.

‘...Why is he happy? Could he be Kang Hansoo or something?’

Misun was confused at first but then was in shock.

‘...Wait.’

Kang Hansoo.

A superhero in the zones below.

He was so famous that the three rulers of the zones had spread out pictures and information about Hansoo to all the rookies.

<Memorize this. This is a small booklet with all the information regarding the man called Kang Hansoo. If you do find him then immediately report it.> And they, the rookies, couldn’t go against their owners.

They all knew his traits.

But Misun soon shook his head as she stared at Hansoo.

‘The sizes are different.’

Their sizes were too different.

There was a limit of how large and small a human being can become.

And another thing.

‘...Why are there so many guys impersonating him.’

And most of the impersonators were bastards.

Just like the man in front of him.

Then.

“So where’s the main base of the 4th zone? Is it the War Fortress?”

“...Don’t you have amnesia.”

“I remember a bit here and there. Don’t rebuke.”

Misun spat as she continued to speak.

“It was like that in the past. But not now.”

“The past?”

Then.

The four all clenched their teeth.

“Yeah. In the past. Most of the humans who had been in the War Fortress... Have been killed when that fucking Dark King blew it apart.”

The two disasters that had appeared with the Abyss.

First was the Abyssal race.

Second was...The transcendents.

A type of people completely different from the normal beings.

Their numbers and how they came to be were all a mystery but they were extremely powerful.

It would be a huge benefit if they stood up for the humans.

But sadly, most of them were like demons.

‘Fucking bastard.’

Misun grinded her teeth as she thought of the Dark King.

.....

Rumble.

“Good...Very good.”

The top of the War Fotress.

A chair sat on top of the castle.

A man and a huge beast sat here.

“Yes, good kitty. Good kitty.”

And the creature that had its neck held by the man in the chair was a Kang-Kion.

The Kang-Kion, whose sole reason of existence was to feast upon other creatures such as the humans, was growling dispirited.

Then.

A man approached and spoke to the man sitting on the chair.

“So... Are you just going to ignore it.”

The man sitting on the chair stood up as he spoke.

“It’s time to set off.”

The man’s figure was clearly seen as he stood up.

A golden spear and a silver set of armour.

From the small ring on his hand to the huge size of his body.

‘...He really imitated him well. What did he say? He got the same outfit because he respected the man?’

The man mumbled as he looked at the Dark King standing in front of him.

Chapter 305 : Transcendent (3)

4th zone.

The cold and brutal world that the recently graduated students had to face.

.....

Rumble.

“Hmm. He destroyed the War Fortress?”

Minsun slammed onto the ground and spoke after breathing in and out.

“Yeah. We all spread out from that event.”

The countless adventurers who had climbed up through the elevator from the 3rd zone.

And the scenery they had seen was extremely shocking.

<...It's a bit barren isn't it?>

<We did hear about it but...>

They had heard the stories.

That the upper zone would be different and much more dangerous.

But most adventurers ignored the warnings of the three rulers.

Since they were basically supernatural beings compared to themselves 1 to 2 years ago.

Beings that could topple cities back in their real life.

They could ignore bullets much less being able to dodge them as even missiles would merely tickle them.

Maybe the only thing that threatened them were the nukes.

Which meant that they had become beings that wouldn't fear anything other than weapons of the same calibre as nukes.

But the moment they climbed up to the 4th zone they realized.

That this was the beginning.

<...It seems we just graduated from the tutorial.> <Fuck...They told us that they didn't know how it had changed but...This is too much.> There were no rulers to control them nor protect them.

There were no seniors who, despite always complaining about how hard the previous life had been before the change, generously taught them the experiences they had gone through and fought on the vanguard.

There was only one thing they saw.

A vast plain covered in snow.

A barren world.

And as the people were filled to the brim with worry at this new and unfamiliar land.

A few people, the strongest and the most talented people, shouted out to lead the others.

<Come on guys! We need to be strong! If the people before us had failed then we can just do it instead!> <Yeah! We can do it! And there's a lot more of us as well!> Thanks to these words, a lot of people regained their confidence.

And it was partly true.

They had countless more people than the people before.

They had gone through simulations as to what to do when they came up to this zone as well.

Though there was no organization that welcomed them, there were no monsters charging towards them from the start as well.

<Yeah! The three zones was an empty land in the beginning as well! We can just deal with this zone!> At those words.

Like the pioneers of the past.

The newly ascended adventurers started to dream.

They had to collect enough Abyssal crystals to go up to the next zone anyway.

With the War Fortress as the main base, they gathered the others who came up from the elevators.

They researched the methods to deal with the monsters that came out from the elevators and slowly and carefully advanced through the 'Green Zone' while collecting the Abyssal crystals at the same time.

Everything was going well and according to plan.

Until that day.

The day the monster the 4th zone had given birth to had visited them.

A single person.

<Hey there baby chicks! How's the real world after graduating?>
Of course the rookies who were in the War Fortress laughed at him.

But with that laugh.

The War Fortress, the main base of operations against the Abyssal race, collapsed.

"...Now we've hidden in various places and survive day by day. Thankfully, this world is large."

And Hansoo knew what kind of person it was.

Since there was only one possibility.

'A transcendent.'

They were different from the normal people who slowly climbed up the stairs to reach the violet zone.

People who had climbed over the destroyed ceiling and had gained the rights to become stronger than anybody else.

But even though they had stepped onto the road towards becoming a transcendent, they were nowhere close to Tiamet who was infinitely close to the end.

Since there were a lot of hurdles to cross before becoming a true transcendent.

But the fact that they had taken that first step made them different from everyone else.

‘It’s possible.’

Transcendents weren’t invincible.

But one thing was clear.

That the newcomers who should be soaring was being stopped at the 4th zone.

This was not what Hansoo wanted.

Though he had found himself, his original goal still remained the same.

<Win.>

He fought and fought.

Against the beings of the Abyss.

But nothing changed.

His friends and allies died.

The ones close to him had all died.

Their numbers never increased, only continuously decreasing.

In movies or dramas shows, when a close person died the main character would be enraged or be filled with new vigor but the reality was different.

Or at least, it was different for Hansoo.

Everyone someone died, something broke inside his heart and he wanted to fight less and less.

What was he fighting for?

Who was he fighting for?

Everybody he had wanted to protect had died.

Everybody who had given him joy had died.

Everybody who fought beside him had died.

And to prevent this from repeating.

He had to become strong.

He had to win.

He had broken through the shackles of Eres, he had merely changed the path towards the final goal.

His final goal was the same as the one of Eres.

But this wouldn't do.

This was, in the same, a gamble as well.

In order for more transcendents to be born, more variables were needed.

More rookies needed to climb up faster to fight in more dangerous places so they can become stronger even faster.

But if they were being stopped in the 4th zone like this, they wouldn't be able to grow properly.

Whooooosh.

'...Too many weeds have grown while I have been gone. I guess I'll need to organize a bit.'

It wasn't bad but it wasn't good either.

He just needed to pull them out.

That was the only way to grow a proper field.

A field to grow his desired crop.

Hansoo mumbled as he looked at the giant elevator and the vast

plains that hid the various monsters and countless adventurers.

.....

Tatata.

Tadadatak.

“Eat this. It’s tastier this way.”

Hansoo cooked the meat of one of the normal beasts, the Ormadals, with a bit of flame from his hands and gave them to Taesang and Misun.

Taesang frowned as he looked at Hansoo who killed off a monster, which would be at around level 250 in the past, with a single strike and was now cooking its meat.

‘How laid back.’

And it wasn’t only Taesang who thought this way.

Hansoo chuckled at the strange gazes of the four.

“Don’t look at me that way. I don’t really like resting like this. And aren’t you going to eat? It’s really tasty.”

“...Haa.”

Taesang sighed as stared at Hansoo chewing onto the meat.

His words weren’t wrong.

Their main base was continuously on the move and they, the scouting team, had to constantly communicate with them to follow them.

And they could only wait in the promised location while they awaited for the reply from the main base.

But even if they were in the same situation, their attitudes were different.

Hansoo was the only one who was laid back.

The four others were just mindlessly eating.

And Misun muttered in annoyance.

“I guess you also starved since you lost your memory. Look how well you’re eating.”

Talking to Hansoo about the past, she remembered things she had forgotten about.

The memories of her missing allies that had been pushed aside because of her survival.

The hundreds of thousands of her allies who had split up from the War Fortress and were now in hiding.

How could she eat in a situation like this?

Hansoo looked towards the elevators while Misun and the others were thinking of the past.

‘We’ve come closer.’

The elevator.

And the War Fortress.

The place where he had fought with Arthus Krancheska and Tiamet.

At that moment.

“I have a request.”

“...?”

“It’s not hard. And I don’t have thoughts of asking you to do it for free...”

Hansoo was shocked as he stared at Lauren who was walking towards him.

He had heard about it already.

‘Look at these guys.’

Hansoo made an amused expression.

.....

Rumble.

The giant elevator.

Though many were amazed at the tall scene.

The elevator spread deep into the earth as well.

It wasn't just limited to the surface.

The great maze.

The elevator stretched deep into the great maze of the past where the Ains had previously lived.

But surprisingly, there were people living here now.

Though they weren't in the greatest shape.

Slap!

"Uaaak!"

"Bastard! If I kept you alive then you need to show results!"

Amidst the swarms of people working.

A single person kept a laid back posture.

He didn't care whether his underling kicked and the one being kicked screamed.

And there was nobody within a 30m radius of the man.

Everyone feared this man.

Roooarr.

The man petted the head of the Kang-Kion next to him and smiled as he looked at the melted wall in front of him.

"Did he do this before the great change."

The entire surrounding area had melted down.

Traces of two tremendous powerhouses clashing.

One could see the person when looking at the traces.

And the stronger the person was, the clearer the image was.

The Dark King could see it clearly.

The image of the existence who had been pushed back continuously but had managed to triumph over the flaming existence.

‘Unbelievable. He’s still in this world. He didn’t go up?’

<The person who you wish to see so much... He’s still here.> He thought that the man had gone up.

He hadn’t thought that a man who was that strong 2 years ago would’ve stayed behind here.

‘I wish...I get to meet you soon. I have a gift for you as well...’

The Dark King caressed the traces of the battle between Hansoo and Arthus Krancheska as he trembled at the shocking fact that person had told him in the past.

Chapter 306 : Transcendent (4)

In the past.

There was a king who had annihilated an entire world with a single ungodly skill.

And this king who had erased the entire world with viruses was sure.

That his strength was not something that was so easily obtained.

.....

Lauren spoke after thinking for a short time.

“...Watch us fight. To see what is wrong.”

She didn't know what level the man in front of her had reached.

But one thing was clear.

It was that he had far more experience than them and was much stronger as well.

‘...And he doesn't seem to dislike us that much at least. Isn't this doable?’

Hansoo laughed.

“Sure. You told me it wouldn't be free, so what will you give me?”

Lauren flinched but then carefully spoke.

“We'll judge it after we hear what you want. Since there might be things you want other than the box. And... There would be more things we can do once we get to the main base as well. There must be something we can do for you.”

Hansoo thought for a bit.

‘They must be a bit influential.’

If they were weaklings in the main base then they wouldn't be

able to speak like this.

Of course he could clearly see the power level of these four.

‘...About level 255?’

Of course the Body Enhancement Surgery, Mana Pool and the Spirit were taken into consideration.

Since they hadn’t reached the limits with their runes, they would become even stronger.

And even more so if he helped them a bit here.

‘...They were just kids with a powerful weapon.’

It was the same in games as well.

The same character would have the difference of heaven and earth depending on who used it.

These were just like that.

Though they were strong and though they had gained a powerful character, their judgement ability, reaction speed or battle experience were all pretty inferior.

‘Though it’s not bad for just being in here for 2 years... It’s still a bit lacking.’

Which meant that there was still a lot to polish.

But that was a good thing.

Hansoo spoke with a bored expression.

“I just want to go the main base as quick as possible. There’s really nothing else I want I right now other than the box.”

Well, he had things he wanted but these guys could not help him.

And at Hansoo’s words.

“...Then there’s nothing we can do then. Let’s go.”

Lauren made a depressed expression but then backed off.

There was no method since this man didn't have anything he currently wanted.

‘No need to annoy him.’

That would be dangerous.

As Lauren started to walk away.

Hansoo asked with an amused expression.

“You’re just leaving? Without trying further?”

Misun was at a loss for words.

‘The hell? Is he playing around with us?’

Didn't he say he only wanted the box?

Which meant that arriving at the main base as quickly as possible was the best thing to do.

Misun didn't really like that man.

No, she just didn't like how such a strong person stayed by them.

The thing Misun regretted the most was getting tangled up with him.

Though they might be able to become stronger if they learned from him, she didn't want to wag her tail and suck up to him just for that.

“We'll manage on our own. Let's just focus on getting to the main base. That was our previous trade.”

They would guide him and give him information.

Hansoo would protect them and get the box.

But from her words.

Hansoo's smile turned bigger and bigger.

“Though you guys can't help me, there is something you can give me right?”

Lauren then turned around in confusion.

But then she instantly regretted it.

She regretted turning around.

The eyes that scanned her and Misun's body.

These were eyes that she had seen too many times in the 2 years she had been here.

The days when she had been forcibly dragged into the tutorial.

As order and law disappeared and strength became everything, those were the eyes of the males around her.

And as she saw those eyes.

The trauma that she had hidden away while growing through the Red, Orange and Yellow zones reappeared.

Then.

“What are you doing!”

Taesang and the other man, Ben, rushed up in front of Lauren and glared at Hansoo.

And Hansoo smirked at the two's actions and smiled.

“Why? It wouldn't be a bad trade. Even if I just fiddle a bit, you would become much stronger than now. Which means you guys would be able to survive in a situation where you would definitely die with your current abilities. Is that really a loss?”

“Look at the logic behind this bastard's words.”

Misun, who had been enraged, stomped up to Lauren and clenched her teeth.

Though there was nothing as precious as a human life, one couldn't throw away everything for it.

“You bastard. We've lived well until now. We will live our life our own way so...Just focus on the one trade we agreed upon.”

At these words.

The smirk of Hansoo was raised to the brim.

“You won’t be able to live well like how you have been up until now. And... Even more so now the world has changed.”

Then.

Whoosh!

Hansoo’s hands reached out and grabbed ahold of Taesang and Ben’s necks.

A tremendous amount of speed and strength.

Ben and Taesang wanted to resist but the attack was sudden and the speed the attack came at was not something they could react to.

They could only watch themselves being lifted up from the ground by their necks.

“Kuhuk...!”

“Arrgh!”

“Fucking bastard!”

Lauren and Misun freaked out and tried to attack as well.

But then.

“Woah, woah.”

Hansoo shook the two men in front of him as shields.

As if he was daring them to attack.

“What a scoundrel!”

Hansoo merely stared at Misun with cold eyes despite her anger.

“Don’t worry, the contract hasn’t ended. My offer still stands. If you give me what I desire...You guys can become strong right? I will even release these guys.”

“...Bastard.”

‘...Was he always like this?’

Misun was extremely troubled right now.

The lives of the four of them depended on her next choice.

And she could choose either side.

Either to give up her body.

Or her life.

And she knew the answer.

But it did not come out easily.

Whilst Misun was hesitating, Lauren stepped up and spoke.

“...Release them. I’ll do as you say.”

“What! How can you trust this guy!”

Lauren merely replied coldly to Misun

“...Whether you believe it or not, there’s nothing we can do.”

“...Fuck.”

Misun was at a loss for words.

Lauren’s words weren’t wrong.

The lower floors had rules and laws as well as the main headquarters in this Zone.

Of course they knew that strength ruled over these so called ‘rules’.

Since they had seen it with their own eyes, the acts of the transcendent.

But they had treated this as a catastrophe and had always thought that they could just slowly become stronger while dodging such cases.

But it seems their thoughts were wrong.

“You cursed monster...”

Misun started to remove her armor pieces one by one while making a dejected expression.

Then.

“I believe you know how it feels to be weak now.”

Taesang and Ben’s bodies dropped onto the ground.

“Ugh.”

“Ahh...”

The guys both touched their necks but there weren’t even bruises there.

And as they all made confused expression.

Hansoo continued to speak.

“You don’t become strong when you get the opportunity to. Don’t hesitate to use any methods to become stronger. There aren’t kind teachers and exams that match your own pace here.”

This wasn’t a game.

One could find a suitable opponent for themselves in a game.

But this place was reality in itself.

A place where a level 100 could pop out in front of a level 1 out of the blue.

One needed to always be thankful of their luck for not meeting such an opponent and always be ready just in case.

Living in constant fear of the future.

But the attitudes of these guys were fundamentally wrong.

And Misun grinded her teeth.

Since she realized what Hansoo had done.

“You bastard... Who are you to test people?”

Though they had passed, it didn't feel good at all.

But Hansoo merely scoffed at her.

“What’s so bad about a test? A test is a very good method created to give you guys a taste of the real deal before it actually comes to get you. Your thoughts will be very different if you start seeing your friends die out before you can even take a test.”

“...Bastard.”

“Be aware. If there’s even the slimmest chance to become stronger, do whatever it takes to grasp it. That’s the way to keep your friends by your side longer.”

At least, this was how he had lived.

Though he couldn't argue that his own thoughts were correct, he had survived like so.

And these guys were way too weak to even voice their opinions in this world.

‘Become stronger... And live the way you want.’

Hansoo liked these guys too much to let them just die.

And Misun spoke towards Hansoo in a frosty manner.

“So what? You want us to lick your boot or something?”

Hansoo chuckled.

“No, I’m a bit kinder. And... There’s only one thing you can help me with, remember?”

“Hmm?”

“I told you, I want to get to the box faster. It would be faster with your help.”

And with Hansoo’s smile that followed this.

Everybody started to feel uneasy.

.....

Boooom!

Misun screamed after a clash against the scorpion-like creature from the Abyss, the Echiton-Filer race.

There were hundreds of these scorpions all around them.

‘Fuck...I need to back up!’

But just as she was about to move back.

“If you back up then what about your friends behind you? They will barely be able to move from lack of space.”

Boooom!

Hansoo smashed away four scorpions with a single strike and then released a cloud of darkness into the air.

The Dark Cloud he released penetrated into Misun’s body and spread out all over inside her.

Then.

The seven skills within Misun’s body got activated instantly as Hansoo controlled Misun to move forwards.

Though a complete control was impossible, due to the huge difference of strength it was more than enough to control her with the Dark Cloud.

“Ahhhhhk!”

Misun was flustered but didn’t resist as if she was already used to this.

Crunch!

Boom!

Hansoo smashed apart a few more Echiton-Filers as he spoke.

“Remember this flow. And don’t always focus on yourself. It’s not you killing as many as possible but rather the four of you killing as many as you guys can and still remaining intact..”

Hansoo laughed as he continued towards the main base in a straight line.

“Isn’t it much faster since you guys are cooperating? See how fast you’re improving.”

Whooooosh.

“Fuck...”

Taesang cursed out of the blue.

Their abilities were indeed improving at a rapid pace.

Even he didn’t know that he was this strong.

The skills he had exploded out controllably one by one.

Though he had always focused on getting powerful skills and a powerful body, he realized something after experiencing it for himself.

Though a sharp and heavy sword was good, the most important thing was the ability of the controller.

But there was something else that was getting on his nerves.

‘But why the hell are your words different from your actions?’

Shouldn’t he be looking for the box?

Though this man was strong, he shouldn’t be at the pinnacle.

If he was then he would be at the old violet zone or the current 7th zone.

The land where the people who have reached the apex resided in.

As Taesang looked towards Hansoo.

Hansoo was also looking at himself.

.....

In a white space.

A single man was seated in a lotus position.

At that moment.

Squirm

The space distorted and ripped apart as it spat out a person.

‘Did he come again?’

The man made an annoyed expression.

Though he was just a wisp of consciousness of the seed and the newcomer was the owner of this space, it was still annoying.

This was why the man was annoyed at the owner of this space.

“How greedy. If you’ve received something nice then just keep it. Why are you even looking over at my things.”

The owner of the space, Hansoo, smiled towards the original creator of the Pandemic Blade.

“From what I hear there are a lot more powerful beings on this land, I need your strength.”

Chapter 307 : Transcendent (5)

The original creator of the Pandemic Blade.

The transcendent, who could be anywhere in the Abyss or even somewhere other than the Abyss, shook his head towards Hansoo.

“Though I’m not my true self...I’m still far from your level.”

The man who had been sitting in a lotus position slowly raised his finger that had been resting on his right knee.

Then.

From the end of the man’s finger.

Kiiiiiiiiiiiiing.

A much more brilliant and thicker light than Hansoo’s red powder exploded out from the man’s finger.

[Final Thoughts]

A skill that had been created through the entire lifetime’s worth of the creator’s memories, pain, tests, experiences and regrets.

This being was not a living thing but rather a wisp of consciousness within the skill of Annihilation.

‘Much stronger than me for sure.’

Boooooooooom!

Along with a huge noise, the seven colored powder within the tip of the man’s finger exploded out.

Chiiiiiiiiik!

Soon the skill, Final Thoughts, started to devour and gnaw away at the Hansoo inside this space.

.....

Huuududuuk.

“Haaa...”

‘I guess I’m still a bit far from breaching the 2 star boundary.’

Hansoo made a bitter smile as he sensed the result of what had happened inside his mind while slicing a Echiton-Filer into two.

Though he had conquered a single fragment of the Demonic Dragon Reinforcement and was continuously trying, it seems that he was still a bit far from it.

‘But I can’t give up.’

Although that 2-star transcendent shouldn’t be remaining in this 4th zone, many of the transcendents were insane which meant it was still possible.

This was why he had to defeat the fragment of the Pandemic Blade in case he met a 2-star transcendent.

But since he had lost, he wouldn't be able to try again for a while.

Hansoo felt one of his two split souls being destroyed as he focused again on the outside situation.

Uuudududuk.

“Kuhuuk....”

“Haa...Ugh.”

Taesang and the others had dealt with the Echiton-Filers and were gasping for breath.

Lauren’s legs were on the brink of giving out as she seemed like she wanted to sit.

‘No can do.’

Whoosh.

The Dark Cloud fixed her stature.

“If you can’t block a sneak attack from your side then your friend Misun’s head will be cut off. Don’t let your guard down.”

Then.

Lauren, who had been barely standing, frowned.

“Fuck...Then when can we rest! Do you only have thoughts of killing and fighting in your head?”

And Hansoo replied in a simple manner.

“Of course.”

There was only one moment in this world that allowed you to stop thinking about fighting.

Only a single moment.

‘Death’

If you have not reached the state of eternal rest then you have to keep fighting.

Because you were alive.

This was the price of staying alive.

Then.

Whooosh.

A golden ball of light came out from Hansoo’s fingers and flew towards Lauren.

Well, past her body to be exact.

The golden energy exploded out behind Lauren.

Along with a scream.

Kyaaaaaak!

“....Kang Kion.”

Misun and Taesung were at a loss for words when they saw the parts of the creature flying out from the explosion.

It had sneaked past Lauren and had approached herself who had an injury to the ankle.

If that damned bastard hadn’t found it and destroyed it first then

it would've succeeded in taking her life.

Hansoo shrugged her shoulders.

“If you don't want to worry then not doing so is also a good choice, those things will help you stop thinking about such things. Forever that is.”

“...Damn.”

Misun then spoke towards Hansoo quietly.

“...I'll repay you. Tell me if you need anything at the main base. I'll get it or you.”

Misun then kept up her guard while treating her injuries and headed towards her comrades.

And Hansoo smiled at this scene.

‘At least I won't have to tell her about one thing.’

There was another reason to reduce the amount worry one had about fights.

That is finding comrades to worry about it together.

And it seemed like they were doing this well anyway.

‘I wonder how they're all doing.’

Hansoo thought back to the comrades from 2 years ago but then shook his head.

If they were doing well then he would meet them while climbing up the tower.

‘Anyways, the Echiton-Filers are only 3rd grade monsters. Were the monsters that were released only at this level?’

Hansoo mumbled.

Echiton-Filers

A hierarchy type race, though they were dangerous they didn't have outstanding skills and had limited strength so they were rated

as 3rd grade.

Dark-Ramas.

Self ruled race type, they were far beyond 5th grade if one wasn't prepared but if one was sufficiently prepared then they were even lower than Echiton-Filers at 2nd grade.

And Kang-Kion were rated 4th grades as they were hard to deal with even if you knew how to deal with them.

All the abyssal races he had seen up to this point were quite weak.

Though Taesang the 3 others didn't speak for everyone in the 4th zone, he was still shocked at their lack of sense.

But if all the abyssal races were around this level, then it wouldn't be weird.

While Hansoo had been lost in thought.

A voice was heard.

"We're almost there. Right past that hill."

Hansoo looked towards the location where Taesan had been pointing towards.

And Hansoo made a shocked expression.

'...That is.'

The place these guys decided to hide was not far from War Fortress.

It was a similar distance away from the Great Maze as the War Fortress of the Keil Kingdom was.

The Korin Kingdom's Fortress.

Though it was still dozens of kilometers away from the War Fortress, it was not a long distance for that Dark King.

And as if Taesang had read Hansoo's mind, he replied.

"Even if we want to go far, there are just too many abyssal

creatures so we cannot go far. And...This is the only way to recruit even a small amount of people who come up.”

“And for some reason, the abyssal creatures don’t come to that place. It’s the safest spot.”

If you ignore that crazy bastard, then the most dangerous thing were the abyssal creatures.

Since the crazy bastard is holed up in the War Fortress for some reason, the safest spot was anywhere where the abyssal creatures didn’t come to.

Like this fortress.

And Hansoo frowned.

‘They don’t approach it.’

Of course the abyssal creatures weren’t everywhere.

But they would go anywhere the humans went.

There weren’t many exceptions to this and far less of them were beneficial to humans.

Hansoo clenched the golden spear in his hand.

.....

Rumble.

As Hansoo approached.

He could feel the auras within the Fortress.

Thousands of well-organized auras.

But Hansoo frowned.

‘It’s too loose.’

The aura of a person didn’t only tell how strong one was.

It also showed their current condition as well as their emotions.

And it became even more apparent if the opposing side was

weaker.

Though they were well organized, they were also very relaxed.

And Misun spoke in an embarrassed manner after seeing Hansoo's expression.

"Don't be like that. It's because we almost gathered enough of the Abyssal Crystals."

Abyssal Crystals.

In the beginning, this crystal which dropped from the abyssal creatures, brought huge battles in the beginning because of its mysteriousness.

Since there was nothing that didn't have a meaning after a fight in this world.

They thought that it could make them stronger as they madly chased after it.

Until they found out that it didn't have any effects of making them stronger.

But despite that, it was still one of the most important resources of this world.

Since this was the only thing that allowed the elevators to activate.

Only when they had a sufficient amount per person could they go up.

This was why they had to continue fighting against the Abyssal Creatures.

Since if not, they would have to remain in this world.

And the four leaders who had escaped with their respective groups made a decision.

To go up.

Though there were higher chances of danger, they had hopes in

another factor.

The people who went before.

There were over 10 million people who had went up in the past two years.

<There's no way that many people all died. Let's join up with them.> And everybody agreed to this.

Since that Dark King was too much for them to continue staying here.

A natural disaster should be dodged.

Misun turned around and glanced at the man.

'...I hope things go well.'

They weren't monkeys.

It was 99% clear that this man was a transcendent as well.

They could feel the traces of transcendent aura from time to time.

The issue was the people inside the fortress.

The people inside were deathly afraid of transcents.

None of them wanted to befriend a transcendent.

Misun carefully spoke towards hansoo.

"Could you just stay here?"

"Stay?"

Misun nodded.

"...There's no need to create issues right? Your objective was the box anyway. We'll get it for you after we go in."

They had been dragged here because of fear and relief at the fact that the man didn't treat them half badly.

But she woke up after seeing the fortress.

There was a high chance of issues occurring if they took this man inside the War Fortress.

They just needed to give back the box.

According to her thoughts, this man had nothing to do with them as long as they gave back the box.

Then.

Whooooosh.

Something cut through the air and headed towards them rapidly.

‘What the...No way!’

Misun looked up to see if it was an attack.

But it wasn’t a weapon that she saw.

Boooom!

The object which had been thrown made a huge noise as it landed on the ground.

Hansoo picked up the object as he chuckled.

“It seems I’ve gotten it back a bit too easily.”

‘Too easily.’

Hansoo picked up the box and looked towards the man who was looking at him with a stern expression.

Chapter 308 : Nursery (1)

He spent a long time thinking in the egg.

His battles were already set in place. It was his destiny.

He couldn't avoid the invasion of the Abyss.

To become the evil king was also part of his destiny.

Since it was the most efficient path.

But then a question arose in his mind.

The path and goal were both set.

But as for me...

What am I fighting for?

.....

“Damn...those crazy bastards. What the hell did they drag over?”

‘How could he bring in something like that after knowing what happened to us with the last transcendent?’

Akran, one of the four leaders, gulped as he looked down from high atop the castle.

Out of curiosity, he'd wanted to open the door on a whim, but then quickly gave up that idea after hearing Taesang's voice.

He didn't want to get involved with things like this.

‘Damn... I don't know what's inside, but hopefully, it's what he wants.’

Akran gulped.

There were clear traces of his attempts to open the lid.

If that monster didn't find what he wanted inside that box, he'd be the first person they'd blame.

Because he might've tampered with the box's contents.

And because of Akran's attitude, everyone else inside the fortress looked confused.

"Is there an issue?"

"You said that in the scout's report, there was nothing wrong."

"Did the Kang-Kions come back? They seem to be hanging around this area lately."

'Damn.'

His face had shown how flustered he felt.

Akran frowned; he'd hid the fact that a suspected transcendent had arrived.

Though he had dispatched a hundred people to various places with just a brief message, he hadn't informed the general public due to the possibility of it bringing further panic and chaos.

Some might say his methods were foolish, but he did not regret his actions.

After all, the opponent he was facing was not someone he could safely go up against.

It was better to do this rather than piss the guy off.

And the people behind him were already very fearful of transcents.

"No. Just focus on distributing the crystals. We'll...head up soon."

Akran's words seemed to ease their perturbed expressions, and he re-focused his attention back to the man opening the box.

C-c-c-crrackk—

'That... That easily?'

The box that he'd tried so hard to pry open was opened in a brief moment.

But at the same time, it further aroused his curiosity.

‘...What could it be?’

It was an item that even a transcendent was looking for.

And it was stored in such a hard case.

It wouldn’t be a simple object.

Akran’s focused his exceptional eyesight—though not as impressive as a transcendent’s—at the insides of the box.

‘...What the hell?’

A simple letter was tucked inside.

‘Just a letter?’

Akran grinded his teeth.

As his expectations were high, so too was his disappointment.

But his disappointment wasn’t a big deal—if the other party was disappointed, then that would be a huge issue.

‘I should prepa...’

Akran noticed the man’s expression and immediately froze.

The man was smiling.

.....

<Please read, Hansoo>

The box contained a letter.

Hansoo mumbled the name of the man written on top of the letter.

‘Sangjin’

The man he had picked out.

And the man he was forced to part ways with after things had gone south.

‘He had looked for me... But why just a letter?...’

Many more questions bubbled up inside him, but there was nothing more to confirm because he'd checked it out himself.

Hansoo continued to read the letter Sangjin had left behind.

The letter had been written around two years ago.

<With your parting words and the sky's collapse, I and my countless comrades pondered for a long time. We wondered why you did this. Why you decided to bring these beasts into the world. Well, in the end, it was useless to wonder. Even if we wanted to know...there was no way for us to figure out the truth. We thought we were the people closest to you, but even we were left in the dark...ha...> “...”

Hansoo's grip tightened for a moment from the emotions that sprang up inside him from the letter.

But he continued to read; there was too much he needed to know.

<So we set out looking for you. If we could somehow find you... you might give us an answer.> <Though we were sad at seeing the chaos between the humans and the beasts of the Abyss, we decided to look for you first. We didn't want to abandon you so quickly.> <Since we thought that you had your reasons for doing this.> <So everybody set out to search for you.> <In this vast Green Zone.>

It wasn't just Sangjin's thoughts contained within this letter.

It was all of them.

Hansoo clenched his teeth as he read on.

‘Why didn't they just give up and leave...?’

He had followed the restrictions placed on him while his memories were also sealed, and he had focused solely on his objectives.

Though he'd made some friends during the tutorial stage where the restrictions were weaker, he had started to focus more and more on his objectives when he entered the Red Zone.

In the Yellow and Green Zone, this shift had been more apparent.
So much so that nobody would go near him.

Because he had acted like a machine and discarded his relationships, he'd thought that Sangjin and Mihee would've forgotten about him as well.

But apparently, that hadn't been the case.

This was not what Hansoo wanted.

He'd wanted them to leave him behind and to quickly move on.

'...Let's just read on and see what happened.'

There were still some parts left in the letter.

Hansoo decided to continue reading.

<But man, you really hid yourself well. Countless people eventually gave up looking for you and decided to return to the elevator to meet with those who came up from below. They felt it would be easier to look for you once we secured our own safety and stabilized the situation first.> <We should have done this from the start, but it seems we had been relying on you too much.> <But...we soon realized that we had made a terrible mistake.> <While we were looking for you, we didn't know what was going on with the people who were coming up from below. How they were being treated.> The scenes they saw weren't of monsters of the abyss attacking humankind.

It was a human.

A human who looked like them and should be on their side.

That human was attacking them.

A single human.

And once they saw this disgustingly powerful being, only then did they realize.

That the change hadn't only come to the beings of the Abyss.

The existence that would change the hierarchy.

Transcendents.

The elites of the elites had banded together, only to barely defeat one.

And after realizing that sheer numbers weren't enough to deal with this person, only then did they realize.

That this being hadn't been born of chance.

And that there was more than just one.

In the vast world where the three Kingdoms and the one Empire ruled over.

This sole beast was slowly expanding his power.

<From the east... They were coming from the east. Though they were low in number, they were being made at a constant pace. I don't know who made them, nor why they had done it, but it is what it is.> Even stranger was that they weren't really doing anything with them.

They just created these monsters and spread them around with only a single message left behind.

<Do whatever you desire.>

Anyways, it didn't matter who was in the west.

They realized that the unity of humankind would only be possible after they became transcendents themselves.

Uniting humankind would normally be an impossible feat, if not for the threat of the transcendents constantly being born.

Which meant that if they could become transcendents on their own, they would be able to resist the attacks of the other transcendents.

And because they realized this, they decided to give up searching for Hansoo.

<So we split into two teams.>

One went up.

Since they needed to stop those who were causing chaos above.

Though it would be for the better if the other transcendents stayed on this floor, the chances of that not happening were greater since they would naturally like to keep climbing up.

The other team remained in the Green Zone and headed towards the west to deal with the villainous group.

If they didn't create a safe passage, they wouldn't be able to go up even if those above had created a safe haven.

But sadly, they had settled around the elevator.

They couldn't deal with the beings of the Abyss as well as the transcendents at the same time.

Samuel and the rest had left with countless others, and so they didn't have enough power to do so.

But other than the two teams, there was one person who decided to act by himself.

<I kept on looking for you. Though the rest were preoccupied with their own tasks... I could not give up on you. I wanted to find you and ask you. To ask why you told me to follow you if you were only going to do this in the end.> The letter stops briefly, and after a short pause, it continues.

<And then I finally found you. I found you and... I wrote this. As I look to you who can't even respond. And feeling angry at myself for not being able to help you.> <I wanted to wait until the day you came out to ask. To ask why you created such a world.> <But... This is as far as I can go. I have to go up now. Since the others were dying in our place. In case another party reads this instead of you, I did not write the essential methods of becoming a transcendent. But you...you would be able to, even without them. Or you are

already one.> <I don't know when you will come out. But... I wish you will be able to read this in the nearest possible future.>
<...Farewell.>

After finishing the letter.Hansoo re-reads it once again.

He re-reads the parts listing what humanity did and decided upon in the past two years he'd been gone.

Then Hansoo grits his teeth.

'I... I've been asleep for too long. I am sorry.'

Hansoo thought of the people above.

Risking their lives for his sake.

Hansoo's grip on his spear tightens.

'Wait for me.'

Chapter 309 : Nursery (2)

The War Fortress.

The sounds of explosions were occurring.

All from the hands of one man.

-Rumble-

“Hmm. I hope they like this.”

The Dark King hummed as he continued to move his hands around.

How could he not be happy?

For the man he had respected so much to have remained in this world.

‘It’s a good thing I settled around the elevator.’

He continued to hum.

The existence who had created them had left them alone in this world.

Without asking for anything in return.

But a human mind was complex; it could change at a moment’s notice.

Because of this, every one of the transcended chose to settle down far from the elevator, in fear of that being.

Since they’d only get caught if they were found loitering around the elevator.

But he was different.

If he stayed near here.

He would be able to meet Kang Hansoo again.

“Good! I hope he likes this.”

After working on it for so long, the thing the Dark King had created was none other than Hansoo's statue, which towered over hundreds of meters.

He had created it by shaving apart the mountain located next to the War Fortress.

'Well, I don't know what he actually looks like, but I'll know so long as he has the spear, the ring, and his armor.'

But sooner or later, Hansoo would come looking for him.

But after making all this, he started to worry.

Though he himself respected Hansoo, what if...

'...What if he doesn't like me?'

Though he respected Hansoo, he did not want to die just yet.

He merely wanted to be with him, fighting alongside him.

Like those who had climbed up with Hansoo.

And after some time, the Dark King came to a decision.

'This won't do, I must get stronger.'

The being that had created them had even taught them how to become stronger.

It wasn't hard.

Since it was the same as how he'd been born.

'Yeah, this isn't the time to dilly-dally.'

No.

If that Hansoo guy didn't like him and decided to kill him, and he didn't have the power to resist, how sad would that be?

He needed to win the fight, first.

If he could beat Hansoo, then Hansoo might reassess his strength again.

‘Yeah, I must win first.’

The Dark King rose up.

He then called for his underlings in the distance.

“Hey, guys. Throw out the bait. It’s time.”

“...Understood. Shall we use a smaller piece of bait this time around?”

The underlings working for the Dark king replied while trembling in fear. The Dark King merely shook his head.

“No, there’s no need to delay it anymore. Just use it all.”

And from these words.

The underlings trembled in fear because they knew who the ‘bait’ would be.

.....

Hansoo carefully folded the letter, putting it safely underneath his armor, and fell into deep thought.

And now he had another thing he needed to do.

But in the end, his goals hadn’t changed.

Actually, the total amount of work had lessened.

He needed to find his old comrades and deal with the transcendents created by the unknown.

He also needed to find those who were fighting in his place.

‘I’ve dawdled for too long.’

Though his overall job hadn’t changed, his mindset had.

‘Wait for me.’

First, he needed to chase after those who’d gone to the west to fight in place of him.

He didn’t know who had gone since it hadn’t been written in the

letter.

But there would surely be a trail.

Fights between transcendents weren't a simple matter.

'I just need to kill the man who created them.'

It would make things easier if the transcendents were to let the world know of their location, but it would still take an extremely long amount of time to find them all and kill them off one-by-one.

It was more important to kill the one making them rather than deal with the creations.

Hansoo decided to head towards the west.

Misun then asked Hansoo.

"Are you leaving?"

Hansoo nodded.

"I need to go west."

Taesang pondered for a bit and then finally decided to speak out.

"Can you not help us instead? The Dark King must be killed."

They had never even thought of going against the Dark King until now.

After all, they lacked the power to deal with the Dark King himself, even if they could deal with his underlings.

But the man in front of him was also a transcendent.

If this man could handle the Dark King, they could handle the rest.

But the reason why he'd waited until now to ask the question was because even transcendents had their differences.

Even if they had similar strengths, it was clear that danger still existed since it would be unknown who would come out as the victor in the end.

But Hanso had always given the impression that he was far, far stronger than what the Dark King had shown them so far.

‘I had to at least ask.’

Taesang clenched his teeth.

This was the best chance they had to rescue the people being captured, as well as saving the ones who would come up through the elevator.

Maybe the last chance they would get.

If they foolishly allowed this man to leave, then they would regret it forever.

And before Hansoo could even reply.

-Rumble-

-Boom!-

“...Hmm?”

The ground trembled slightly as everyone looked around.

And at that exact moment.

Hansoo sensed the cause of the earthquake.

Thousands of beings were moving quickly on the ground.

Through the ground below.

As well as through the snow.

Towards the War Fortress.

And as he felt this.

Hansoo realized what was going on.

“...I see. So he ran a nursery.”

It seems that no matter how much time passes by, some things remained unchanged.

A new variable had now occurred.

Hansoo looked towards the War Fortress in the distance.

.....

“Hahahahaha! Good! Good!”

The maze beneath the War Fortress.

Through the giant hole that Arthus Krancheska had made in the past.

The underlings of the Dark King were kicking people into the hole.

“Ahhh!” “Ugh!”

The people had thoughts of resisting but soon gave up.

They had clearly seen what happened to the people who resisted.

It was better to fall into the hole.

But one of the newcomers didn’t seem to have realized this as he strongly fought back.

“You bastards! What are you doing?!”

-Boom!-

Apparently, he had been quite famous below; the skills shooting out from his hands were not normal.

But the newcomer should’ve realized.

As to why the underlings of the Dark King weren’t holding them down.

Then—

-Boom!-

A bright orb flew at the newcomer’s head.

“Wha—”

As if he were trying to prove his proficient skills, the newcomer tried to quickly protect his body, but everyone was already turning

their heads away.

Since they knew what was going to happen.

-Boom!-

The bright orb went past his hands, through his head, and into the distance.

-Whoosh-

“Ugh...”

The others gritted their teeth as they watched the body fall into the hole.

The Dark King, who had shot out the orb, grinned as he continued to rile up his underlings.

“Though it’s good that the bait is lively, it shouldn’t try to bite the hand, right? Continue throwing them in.”

“...Yes.”

The underlings, white with fear, continued to kick the people into the hole.

Though they were called underlings, they clearly knew what they really were in the Dark King’s mind.

No, they were probably in a worse situation than the people being kicked into the hole.

-Whoosh!-

-Thump!-

“Argh!”

“Ugh!”

The people continued to fall into the hole, but a mere drop of a few hundred meters wasn’t enough to kill them.

-Tat-

-Tatatat—

The people who got kicked in used various skills to land on the maze below.

“Ugh.”

Then—

‘Wait...? Can’t we just run away?’

The eyes of one of the newcomers shone.

The Dark King was far above them, and the maze spread out in all directions.

Even if the Dark King was strong, how could he catch them all if thousands of them ran in different directions?

The newcomer quickly mumbled after making the observation.

“Hey! Let’s all run away! If we all run...won’t at least half of us live?”

A few mumbled in agreement, but a man who looked like a veteran clenched his teeth and spoke.

“If we separate, then we’ll all die. Stop speaking nonsense and group up. As long as we stay in a group and fight, some of us will survive.”

“What?”

Then—

-Roaaaaaarr—

A strange noise reverberated throughout the maze.

And from this noise.

The veteran screamed to everyone.

“Get away from the ground as much as possible! Kang—”

But before the man could even finish his words.

-Boom!-

The Kang-Kion leaped out from the wall and ripped apart the veteran's neck.

.....

Ahhh.

Uaaaaaahk.

After hearing the scream from below.

The underlings of the Dark King made terrified expressions.

Kang-Kion.

Beings that ate humans and used them as nutrition to repopulate.

And because their way of repopulating was quite grotesque, not many liked to witness it.

But the man in front of them, the Dark King, treated them as pets and even raised them.

<There's no real reason for a fence. Since I just need to keep them in place.> All the nearby Kang-Kions knew.

That food constantly fell down around this time, at this exact spot.

The tens of thousands of Kang-Kions swarming below were proof.

And the worst part was.

They ate the humans and were constantly increasing their own numbers.

There were way more than the actual number of Kang-Kions nearby.

'Damn... Why do they keep increasing their numbers?'

And despite the complaints of the underlings.

The Dark King merely smiled as he looked at the swarming Kang-Kions.

‘Yeah. I was merely thinking too much. He’s still just a transcendent.’

The Dark King hummed.

The method they had taught him.

One of the methods of becoming a transcendent was very simple.

<Collect the crystals of the Abyss. Collect a lot of them.> The Abyssal beings came from outside the Otherworld.

Beings that already had the power to go past the limits.

The crystals that the Abyssal beings left behind after being killed was a code.

If you continued to mix the code of the humans who could not go through the limits with the ones of the Abyssal beings, the human body will forcibly reach the level of a transcendent.

Without any enlightenment or physical strain.

‘A very easy method.’

He was basically performing modern alchemy.

Changing the humans, who were useless to him, into crystals that the Abyssal beings dropped when killed.

‘Please come quickly, Mr. Hansoo. I have a gift for us to enjoy together.’

-Roar—

Kwaaan!

Uwaaak!

How could Hansoo not like him?

It was the fastest route to becoming strong.

This would be a great gift for him, the one he respected so much.

The Dark King continued to smile as he heard the screams below.

Chapter 310 : Nursery (3)

—Rumble—

‘...it seems he raised quite a lot.’

Hansoo mumbled, sensing the number of the Kang-Kions.

The number of Kang-Kions approaching were rising at a steady pace.

Towards the War Fortress where the so-called ‘Dark King’ would be at.

As the number of Kang-Kions rose, the number passing through that area had also risen.

Of course, the Kang-Kions wouldn’t just eat the humans in the War Fortress off in the distance.

Kyaaaaa!

Kuooo!

“Ah...!”

“What’s going on?!”

The Kang-Kions pondered for a moment, then decided to head towards the walls of the fortress where the refugees were currently hiding behind.

The people had been preparing to go up through the elevator, but seeing the Kang-Kions approach the walls, they immediately panicked and quickly started to retaliate against the Kang-Kions.

And soon.

—Rumble!—

“Dammit! Kill them!”

“Group up! Be wary of the ground and the walls, and spread out the Lantanol powder!”

The Kang-Kions were not simple.

How great would it be if they could simply defend against them just by being prepared?

The Kang-Kions had already drilled through the walls and the ground; their bodies were so tough that not even well-sharpened swords could cut through them.

Soon the inner parts of the fortress were filled with screams and the sound of the clashes between the Kang-Kions and the refugees.

Uaaaaak!

“Kuhuk! Block them!”

“Ugh...Damn!”

“What the hell is happening?!”

Every member next to Hansoo, including Lauren, were shocked at the scene and all started pulling out their weapons.

Since the Kang-Kions wouldn't leave the four unscathed.

Kyaaaak!

The Kang-Kions quickly transformed into leopards, leaping out from the ground beneath and rushing towards them.

‘...Damn!’

Taesang grit his teeth, quickly surrounding himself with skills.

Then—

Hansoo lifted his foot, and then slammed it down.

—Boooooooooom!—

A huge, explosive sound rang out as the ground beneath them cracked open, fissures spreading outwards, web-like, in all directions.

Dust flew up alongside the huge noise and created an enormous dust cloud.

The Demonic Dragon Reinforcement that had spread out from Hansoo's foot hadn't stopped shaking the surface, and continued to burrow deeper into the ground, continuously producing shockwaves.

It didn't only affect the beasts above the ground, the Kang-Kions' true bodies underground were hit as well.

Kyaaak!

Roar!

The Kang-Kions, which had been created from the dirt but possessed bodies stronger than steel, broke back into dirt.

The true bodies of the Kang-Kions had also started to disintegrate.

Every Kang-Kion within a hundred-meter sphere around Hansoo had died from a single kick.

Not only on the surface, but also underground.

—Clank—

—Clank Clank—

Countless Kang-Kions in mid-air turned into violet crystals, falling down to the ground.

Kiiiik.

Karrrk.

The other Kang-Kions started to tremble in fear at this sight.

It was that being again.

A mutant born from those animals they treated as food.

That thing looked just like the other things beside it, but it was on a completely different level of its own.

Maybe the other beings of the Abyss—those that they sometimes met in the west and the south—might be able to deal with it.

Their race couldn't even dare to go up against such a thing.

But there was one good thing about them.

Some of those mutants didn't even bother protecting their own kind, and even crossed the line by treating their own race worse than how the Kang-Kions treated them.

Kirrrrk!

The Kang-Kions ran away in fear, and instead headed towards the fortress full of refugees.

"...They're running away."

"..."

Taesang stared at Hansoo in a daze after hearing what Lauren had said after checking the surroundings.

He knew that Hansoo was strong.

But not to this extent.

For him to be able to make them run away with a single step.

In that moment, something started to burn inside his mind.

A desire.

No.

A fervour.

'If only I could become like that too...'

Taesang continued to stare at Hansoo in a daze.

'...I guess I'll need to deal with this quickly.'

Hansoo mumbled, as he looked at the Kang-Kions causing chaos.

Dealing with this chaos wasn't the main issue.

This was nothing more than a small step in the Dark King's quest to become stronger.

'If he knows the method of becoming stronger through the

Abyssal Crystals, then...'

A transcendent, who already had the possibility of going over the limit, would only become stronger with each crystal they collected.

Though it was one of the more efficient and weaker ways of becoming a transcendent, it was one of the fastest ways to raise one's strength.

Like how an adult could still beat a kid to death even if they themselves were bad at fighting.

The level of strength increasing in itself meant a lot.

'If one devoured all the Kang-Kions here...'

If that person became a 2-star transcendent then it would be more than just annoying.

No, he wouldn't be able to beat them in the first place.

Since the difference between a 2-star and a 1-star transcendent was like the difference between a transcendent and a normal being.

If that was actually the case then thankfully, there weren't enough Kang-Kions nearby to actually reach that level.

But of course it wasn't anything to scoff at either.

It wasn't enough to go from a 1-star to a 2-star transcendent, but one could still become terrifyingly stronger.

If the person was given enough time to continue with his <Nursery>, then sooner or later that person would become a 2-star transcendent.

He needed to deal with this person before he ate up all the Kang-Kions in the area.

'I guess... I'll need to prepare something else.'

Hansoo came to a decision and then looked at Taesang.

"You guys said that you collected crystals to climb up, right?"

Taesang, who was still staring at Hansoo in a daze, nodded absently at the question.

“Yes.”

“Hmm...”

Hansoo sensed the number of people inside the fortress and nodded.

Close to 8,000 people.

If there were enough crystals for all these people to go up, then they must’ve worked long and hard to collect them, going through countless dangers to acquire them.

Precious, precious crystals.

But they wouldn’t be using it to climb up.

‘...8,000 is a bit low, but these should be useful.’

At the same time, he commanded.

“Follow me.”

“Huh?”

Even before Taesang could figure out what was going on.

“Huh?...Ahhhhh!”

The four of them, including Taesang, started to float upwards.

Then—

—Swoooooosh!—

Hansoo, who was holding onto their clothes, jumped onto the fortress.

.....

—Boooooom!—

—Boom!—

‘F***ing hell... The amount of casualties are too high!’

Akran, one of the four leaders of the refugees, grit his teeth as he looked around at the fortress swarmed by Kang-Kions.

Quite a large number of Kang-Kions, all heading towards the Dark King's War Fortress, had started to swarm into this place after realizing that there was a large amount of food.

‘F***...it's the Dark King!’

Even these beasts cared for their own kind.

Calling each other to share any food available.

But that bastard Dark King, he drove his own kind to the very corners of the world.

Though a transcendent being had no reason to defend the other humans, they had no reason to attack them either, right?

Akran, after cursing the Dark King for quite a while, stood up.

Danger brought with it opportunities.

Though they had collected quite a large amount of crystals so far, they hadn't the courage to go near the elevator because the Dark King had settled next to it.

But if this chaos was caused by the Dark King, then there was a high chance that he wouldn't be able to keep his attention on the elevator.

Since there were many more Kang-Kions than usual for some reason.

‘Yeah... To hell with it.’

Akran clenched his teeth.

Normally they would've needed more time to collect enough crystals for everyone, but since this was the case, it didn't matter anymore.

Since a lot of people had already died.

Akran shouted out loud.

“Everyone retreat! Maintain formation and head towards the elevator!”

‘Charge through to the elevator like this!’

The survivors would use the crystals to go up.

As Akran shouted.

The other three leaders swung their spears and slowly started to create a battle formation to valiantly retreat valiantly to the front.

‘Good.’

Looking at the formation that was barely holding on, Akran clenched his teeth and ran.

Since he had another job to do.

‘Crystals...I must get the crystals.’

Without the crystals, there would be no exit for them even if they reached the elevator.

He needed to quickly retrieve the crystals and distribute them to everyone.

As long as they could reach the elevator, and even if they were seperated, the crystals would help them go up.

Akran dashed madly towards the storage area holding the crystals.

Then—

—Boom!—

—Boom! Boom!—

Explosive sounds could be heard behind them, causing Akran to turn around in shock.

‘It’s him!’

The moment something rose high above the walls of the fortress, Akran’s expression brightened up.

‘If he could help us...’

Then they would be able to lessen the number of casualties even further.

And as he expected.

—Boom!—

Kyaaaak!

Kurrrrrr!

With every step, the Kang-Kions died screaming.

Though he moved over dozens of meters with every step, every Kang-Kion in a radius of a hundred meters were killed off every time his foot made contact with the ground.

And thanks to this, the people who had been fighting in the nearby area were able to help their comrades in other places.

A simple walk had changed the battlefield.

‘If only we could have a person like that...’

Akran made a depressed expression but soon shook his head.

An uncontrollable bomb was better than nothing.

If that man suddenly changed his mind, what would happen to them?

He could not possibly understand the thoughts of a transcendent since he didn’t have the strength to treat all other human beings as ants like they did.

‘But...this is still good enough.’

But then—

Akran’s expression suddenly turned for the worse.

He had realized where the man was heading to.

‘No....NO!’

Akran roared in despair as he looked at where Hansoo was heading.

“NO! NO! YOU BASTARD! NO!”

—Boom!—

Akran continued to roar as he madly dashed off in the same direction.

Towards the storage area the man was currently approaching.

But sadly, Hansoo’s speed was much greater than that of Akran’s. Extremely so.

—Whooosh!—

Hansoo arrived at the storage area first.

And by the time Akran caught up to him, the doors were already being ripped apart.

“You f***ing bastard...Stop!”

‘Wait...Could it be? No way!’

He’d had a strange suspicion once.

That maybe the Abyssal Crystals were the secrets of the transcendents.

But he didn’t know how to use them in the first place, plus these things were too precious to use without solid proof.

But sadly it looked like his previous guess was correct.

Hansoo merely shook his head at Akran.

“I’m not trying to use it for myself.”

He wouldn’t use the crystals to strengthen himself.

Well, he could, but it would be very inefficient in the long run.

“What?”

Akran replied dazedly, but Hansoo merely walked into the

storage area. There was no time to explain everything to this person one-by-one.

—Whooosh—

Hansoo collected the violet crystals into a single area and looked towards the War Fortress in the distance.

.....

—Crunch—

—Crack—

‘Good...very good.’

The limitations inside his body were breaking apart.

The very rules that bound everyone in this world shattered apart as it changed for him and him alone.

A change that allowed him to become the center of the world.

‘Damn...Is this how you felt as well?’

The Dark King felt the energy from the violet light being sucked into his body. He smiled as he thought of the transcendent in the past.

The man who had turned him, a normal human, into a transcendent.

Chapter 311 : Nursery (4)

Hansoo mumbled as he looked towards the giant storm above the War Fortress in the distance.

‘...Hold on.’

As he looking at the crystals in front of him, Hansoo thought about those who were fighting in his place.

It wasn't enough to create a transcendent from scratch.

It wasn't enough to break past the wall.

But it was enough to bring up somebody who had reached their limits.

Hansoo then turned around to look at the four behind him.

Lauren Bell, Taesang and Misun.

The first people he'd met after being born.

And Akran, who was staring at him from the distance.

‘Hmm.’

Hansoo swept past them and then started to create something in his hand.

—Ssssk—

Something dark, and blood-red in color appeared.

Everyone looked confused.

They didn't really feel anything.

‘...What about it.’

But there was one who reacted differently.

—flinch—

Hansoo saw Taeasng flinching at the sight of his hand. He pointed at him.

“You’ll do.”

“...What do you mean?”

Hansoo replied, as he crushed a crystal in his hands.

“As a transcendent being.”

“Huh?”

Akran was shocked.

Transcendent?

‘...Was it that easy to become one?’

No, let’s say becoming one was easy.

But why did it have to be Taesang?

Taesang was talented, yes.

Though being in the top 10 might be a stretch, he was definitely in the top 20.

It was why he’d been picked as a scout, one of the more dangerous jobs.

But if it were up to his choice?

Taesang would not fit the criteria.

Akran couldn’t hold back and asked.

“Why does it have to be Taesang? Could you tell us the requirements?”

Though he was a bit sad that it wasn’t him, that wasn’t the main reason why he asked.

What if there was a special trait one needed to become a transcendent?

And what if he could acquire the method of creating one?

‘Then...Then I could pick them out personally and raise them.’

People who had the potential to become transcendents through

the most efficient and quickest manner.

Kuooo!

But Hansoo never replied to Akran's question.

Since Hansoo was completely focused on grinding the crystals apart.

He should be grinding them even finer, but there was no time to do so.

He needed to do this as quick as possible.

—Rumble—

With Hansoo at the center, a storm was brewing inside the storage area.

And the countless violet crystals started to melt, merging into a single strand of smoke which then merged into the storm.

The overflowing energy turned to lightning, striking nearby surfaces.

—Crack!—

“What the...”

“Woah!”

Everyone retreated from this scene.

—Boom!—

A bright light exploded out from Hansoo's hands and something came into sight.

Something similar to an amethyst; a tiny gem the size of a fingernail.

Everybody stared at this beautiful gem.

Hansoo spoke to Taesang.

“Digest this and then go to the War Fortress once you're done.”

It actually took time for a person to fully absorb and get used to their new strength.

And there wasn't enough time at hand to wait until Taesang was finished.

Since the other party was growing stronger at an even faster rate.

“You mean, you want me to come help?”

If the opponent was too strong and he needed a helper, then making a transcendent made sense.

Since two was better than one.

‘But then... I will also...’

Hansoo scoffed at Taesang who seemed to be in high spirits.

“Of course not.”

Taesang might be able to become a complete transcendent, but the amount of crystals here weren't enough for him to fully cross the wall.

He might barely be of use if he crossed the wall entirely—he'd be useless if he stopped at the halfway point.

There was another reason why he'd made this gem and given it to Taesang.

“Let's just say... you're insurance.”

“...Pardon?”

—Poof—

Before Taesang could even react, Hansoo smashed the violet gem into Taesang's heart.

But despite flying in so fast it could have shredded through Taesang's ribs and heart, the gem was merely absorbed into the flesh.

Then—

—Thump—

“Huh?...What?”

‘...What the hell?’

Taesang exclaimed out loud as he felt the energy flowing out from his heart.

Like paint spreading through water, the violet light soon covered Taesang’s entire body.

Covering everything from his intestines, his muscles, his bones, and his skin.

As if his entire body was being infested.

Then—

‘...What is this?’

Taesang was shocked at the strange sight happening to his own body.

The change was too abnormal for him to gladly accept.

The numbers that had strengthened his body.

The runes that he’d fought for with his life to become stronger were being erased.

Well, it was more like the runes were being altered.

The eight different runes, such as strength or agility, were breaking apart.

The strength runes broke down and mixed with the agility runes, the vitality runes also broke down and merged with the mana runes.

Like this, the eight different runes began to merge into a single point.

Then—

‘Ah...AHHHH!’

A tremendous amount of pain.

As if his soul was being ripped apart from his body.

Well, that was really the case.

His consciousness was becoming blurry.

As if his soul was being forcibly sucked up to a higher place.

A strange but comfortable feeling.

And as Taesang slowly closed his eyes.

He heard the voice of the man who had caused all of this.

“Remember. After the end...Come.”

And with these words.

Taesang lost consciousness.

.....

—Boom!—

Hansoo blew apart the Kang-Kions as he ran towards the War Fortress in the distance.

—Crunch!—

—Crack!—

Before this, he'd been careful not to hurt other people, but since he had nobody to look out for anymore, he was free to create an even stronger shockwave beneath his feet.

And then reflected in his eyes.

The distant War Fortress quickly becoming larger.

And the violet storm above the War Fortress slowly being sucked into it.

Into the maze below.

Hansoo heard the thunderous noise as he lifted up his Forked Lightning.

Then—

—Rumble!—

A tremendous amount of energy rose from his heart and started to surround his body.

One.

Two.

Three.

The dragons continued to crawl out until the number reached five.

The dragons now displayed an even deeper color, and looked larger than before he'd gone into the egg.

And as these dragons converged onto the tip of Forked Lightning.

—Boooooooooom!—

From where Hansoo had been standing, all the way to the underground area beneath the War Fortress.

A giant tunnel, several kilometers in length, had been created.

—Crackle!—

The ground cracked apart as the walls of the maze fell down.

The tunnels of the maze, that even Arthus Krancheska could barely melt even after a long period of time, were all punctured through in an instant.

The dark sphere that had created the giant hole continued to penetrate the ground, burrowing towards the Dark King who was devouring the crystals extracted from the Kang-Kions he massacred.

Then—

—Boom!—

The violet storm dispersed in an instant.

It wasn't just because of Hansoo.

—Swoosh!—

Something dashed out from beneath the maze at an extreme speed.

Even faster than Hansoo.

“Hahahaha! You have come! Welcome!”

Laughing out loud, the thing that had rocketed into the sky started to slowly float down.

His existence alone was awe-inspiring.

His laughter alone shook the heavens and made the earth tremble.

The Dark King landed on top of the statue and smiled.

“It's good that I waited below, otherwise this statue that I had so painstakingly created would've been destroyed, right?”

“A statue... I see.”

Though they were several kilometers apart, they spoke as if they were standing right next to each other.

Hansoo looked at the giant statue; the man had created it by shaving apart the mountain next to the fortress.

Though the face was left blank, his armor, ring and spear were incredibly detailed.

Hansoo then remembered what Taesang had said.

<Apparently that crazy Dark King guy crazily respects that person called Hansoo.> The Dark King laughed as he looked at Hansoo.

“Man, why couldn't you have come a bit earlier? I...I might've left some for you. How could I not give even that much as a gift to the person I respected the most?”

Respected.

Hansoo smirked at the past tense.

“I see that you’re standing on top of the person you respect.”

“Oh my, what a mistake.”

The Dark King smiled apologetically, but then smashed apart the statue with his foot.

—Boooom!—

And from the shockwave, the giant statue became a humongous rock avalanche, which fell in a flood towards the War Fortress that was barely maintaining its shape.

“Uwaaaak!”

“Nooo!”

The surviving refugees who were still fighting against the Kang-Kions screamed, and the Dark King laughed when he heard them.

‘Good. Good.’

The Dark King made a satisfied smile as he looked at the scene below him.

And as Hansoo looked at him, he also looked back at Hansoo.

It was stronger and larger than the shockwave that Hansoo guy had created.

The time he’d spent here dealing with small fries hadn’t been a waste.

Hard work will never betray oneself, they say.

And this was the result of that hard work.

‘Yes...Strength is the best.’

The Dark King thought back to the time when he once respected Hansoo, then smiled.

“How about it? Am I not better? I believe... We don’t need two

Kang Hansoos in this place.”

And from these words.

Hansoo merely smirked coldly.

“Of course. Don’t worry about it. I don’t have any plans of killing you.”

.....

Don’t even dream about dying.

I’m going to squeeze out every last drop.

Chapter 312 : Clash (1)

In this hell.

For what must they live for?

We need someone to lead us.

.....

‘Sign...I envy the previous generations.’

—cough—

The adventurer, Niclouse, looked into the sky above the crumbling war fortress and puked out blood.

Although the previous generation needed to go through difficult situations without any knowledge, at least they’d had a leader.

To him, there was no Kang Hansoo.

Only an evil Dark King who pretended to be him.

Niclouse thought back to the words the Dark King had always mumbled in the past.

<Just wait. Once I become stronger... You will see a new ray of hope.> ‘F***ing maniac.’

Niclouse cursed that man as he forcibly raised his body up.

At this rate, he would get squashed to death by the rubble.

He started to slowly climb up.

Away from the battlefield.

.....

—boooom!—

“Hahahaha!”

The Dark King laughed as he felt the overflowing power inside him.

He didn't feel the same glee and joy of the past when he'd become a transcendent; another feeling now filled him.

When he'd first become a transcendent, it was as if he'd become a brand new bowl.

A weak sauce tray being broken apart and being born anew as a large, strong bowl.

And how it felt as if that exact bowl had been filled to the brim.

To the point that the water inside it could overflow at any moment.

Tens of thousands of crystals exploded, giving him strength.

It changed his body and gave him enough power to smash apart the world.

“Hahaha! Try catching this!”

A bright orb appeared in the hands of the Dark King.

[Triple Demonic Bullets]

A regular skill which could be acquired with ease, even in the old Red Zone.

It had a speedy reload time and was easy to fire, but it could only fire in a straight line and didn't do much damage.

It was good enough to use as a probe, but not to deal fatal damage to a person.

Usually, at least.

If a normal person used it, that is.

—rumble!—

Thunder and lightning exploded out from the orb.

Then—

—boom!—

The orb shot out from the Dark King's hands, the ruins of the

fortress were lifted into the air, and the space around them trembled.

Dust flew apart in all directions as if a bomb had exploded.

And through the dust—

—boom! boom! boom! boom!—

The bright orb smashed apart everything in its path as it continued to rush towards Hansoo.

It created gales in its wake and turned the stone below it into a river of lava.

And as the orb made contact with Hansoo's spear— —boom!—

A blinding light exploded outwards.

The surrounding ruins of the War Fortress turned into dust from the shock wave, and the ground nearby began to sizzle.

And the Dark King laughed coldly at this scene.

‘Mmm. That spear definitely suits me.’

He could clearly see it during the explosion.

The golden spear that was trying its best to disperse the energy.

Although it had met the wrong owner—in his opinion, anyway—the fact that it could withstand his overflowing energy was something to compliment.

The Dark King stared at the golden spear in Hansoo's hands and then looked at the imitation in his own hands with a dissatisfied expression.

Then—

—crunch—

He split the spear into two.

Though it was a good spear, it was a spear that could be found anywhere and then merely covered in gold.

It was too weak to withstand the strength of a transcendent like himself.

Though he had broken his own weapon during battle, his expression was still bright.

Since a spear like that wouldn't help him much in a fight anyway.

And soon he would be able to gain the real thing.

'Strength really is the best.'

In the past.

He had revered Hansoo.

The man who had succeeded in terraforming the previous zones into a livable space.

Though he hadn't seen Hansoo's actions in person, he was part of the group that followed right behind Hansoo and Mihee.

Though he hadn't seen them personally, Hansoo's footprints could be felt all over his body as he climbed his way up.

He felt the might of the World Tree Hansoo had revived in the Red Zone.

The giant Gragos that Hansoo had succeeded in taming in the Orange Zone.

Countless Satellite Fortresses that covered the skies in the Yellow Zone.

And in the Green Zone, he had fought to help Hansoo during the Battle of the War Fortress.

He had personally seen the hole appear in the sky as the elevators descended and the world transformed.

He reveled in the footprints of this giant and respected them.

Respect towards the being that had done things he could not.

He remembered the stories of those who had seen Hansoo up close, and remembered them during the hard times to keep himself going.

He'd kept going until the day he could meet the man in his dreams.

But now.

With his strength.

His thoughts had changed.

'If I had strength, I could've done that as well.'

Kang Hansoo.

He was stronger than anyone else and had succeeded against any enemy.

There were some who'd helped him, and those beside him were also quite strong, but in the end, his individual strength had played the biggest role.

If Hansoo had done it.

Couldn't he, who was now even stronger than Hansoo, do it as well?

'Just wait. I will be the one to lead you guys now.'

There was a reason why he had spared a group of people, despite having been able to turn them into crystals as well.

How could a king be a king by himself?

He needed subjects.

And the people at his side would now serve the strongest king in history.

Even stronger than this living legend.

"Hahaha!"

The Dark King laughed maniacally and jumped down.

He could only win.

There was a clear difference in power.

The energy absorbed from the sacrifice of tens of thousands of Kang-Kions transformed into skills.

A skill useful in dealing with small fry, but not really those of similar levels—an immolation type of skill—exploded out from his body.

[Dark Sun].

—rumble—

A dark sun which set everything nearby ablaze rose up from the Dark King's body.

“F***!”

“Run!”

The screams of countless adventurers were heard by the Dark King, but he merely ignored them.

Since those who ran away didn't have the qualifications anyway.

Then—

Hansoo, surrounded by golden light, walked out from the dust clouds.

Though he was covered in dust and minor injuries, he was mostly fine.

And the Dark King's expression darkened at this unexpected turn.

‘Though it was just a probe...’

As the Dark King frowned.

Hansoo also frowned as he spat out—

“I've waited two years, you guys can't only be at this level right?”

The Dark King almost cried at Hansoo's look of contempt, as if he

was not worthy.

It was similar to those eyes he had seen in the past.

<Are these the only guys left... Haa. I guess there's no choice>
The eyes of the being that had given him this strength.

Hansoo was showing him the exact same expression.

But even before the tears could come out from the Dark King's eyes— Hansoo moved first.

He needed to teach a lesson to the Dark King who had fearlessly approached him.

‘You should’ve kept your distance...’

Then—

—boom!—

The sound of a huge explosion blasted out from Hansoo's position as the entire area around him crashed down.

Using the tremendous earthquake-like shockwaves as momentum, Hansoo's body shot out like lightning.

And now dark-gold energy surrounded Hansoo's body.

The Reinforcement skill covering Hansoo's body was no longer translucent.

It had been compressed to the point of resembling silk.

Hansoo, covered in the Demonic Dragon Reinforcement, dashed towards the Dark King.

‘...I can block it!’

The Dark King was shocked for a moment, but then relaxed.

Since he could clearly see his movements.

It wasn't at a level where he couldn't catch up.

Not at a level he couldn't react to.

Actually, he could even move faster.

‘I shall show you my strength.’

He wanted to show off.

The strength he had gained.

He wanted to smash his opponent apart.

The Dark King started to burn the Dark Sun around his body with even more fervour.

Then—

—whoosh—

The Dark King swung his fist with all his might— Towards the tip of Hansoo’s spear.

‘I will show you the difference in our strength!’

And as his fist swung out—

—boooooooooom!—

A fist covered in black flames, and a spear covered in dark-gold silk collided.

And the Dark King smiled at this scene.

‘I...I can win!’

His Dark Sun was burning the silk-like reinforcement on the spear.

Though his opponent’s reinforcement was more compressed than his own, his endless flames still managed to burn through it.

But as the Dark King’s smile broadened at the sight of the spear bending more and more.

A change occurred.

—swoosh!—

The silk covering Hansoo’s entire body started to sway and move

about.

Then—

—whoosh!—

The Demonic Dragon Reinforcement covering Hansoo's entire body started to condense into a single point.

Towards the the tip of his spear.

And as the thin silk-like reinforcement focused onto a single point— The Reinforcement started to let out a blinding light in all directions.

Then—

—boom!—

“Uwaaaa!”

The Dark King freaked out at the scene of his Dark Sun being instantly shredded apart, and quickly retreated.

Blood gushed out from the fist that had collided with the spear.

‘No...NO! NO WAY’

The Dark King was extremely confused.

His opponent was merely a relic of the past.

He had clearly been lazing around.

Since the man should've been far above in the upper zones.

With the amount of work he himself had gone through, he couldn't lose like this.

Then—

—boom!—

A tremendous amount of energy exploded out from the Dark King's body.

He had a dream.

He couldn't fall here.

Though it was a person he'd revered, he could not allow Hansoo to block his path.

‘I...WILL...NOT...LOSE!’

—rumble—

The still-burning remains of the Dark Sun disappeared.

As well as every other skill in his body.

Every ounce of power in his body turned into a single skill.

A skill that the man who had given him this strength had left behind.

<It'll be useful. Make sure you only use this instead of other skills. Make sure of it. Focus on just one.>

.....

Ten thousand mediocre skills could not defeat a single mastered skill.

That was why the transcended needed to know how to focus on a single skill.

Chapter 313 : Clash (2)

—rumble—

From the fortress Hansoo had come from.

The change occurring inside it was finishing up.

“Ha...”

Taesang landed on the ground, letting out a deep breath.

And then made an expression full of glee.

‘This was it, huh?’

He knew now.

As to why the transcendents were so much stronger than normal people.

It was because they could manipulate and use the eight different types of runes in any way they wanted.

And Akran had asked Taesang with a nervous expression at this point.

“What...what’s changed exactly?”

Though Akran had asked the question, Taesang’s comrades were looking at him with curious expressions as well.

Then—

—boom!—

“Damn! Run! They’re rushing in here!”

One of the adventurers standing guard outside shouted a warning as he blocked the Kang-Kions from rushing through the main door.

‘Oh, right!’

Akran had forgotten about their current situation due to the scene that had been unfolding in front of him.

Forgotten that their current situation was not that great.

‘We have to run now!’

Then—

“It’s alright.”

Taesang spoke out confidently.

A calm, resolute voice.

‘He-up!’

Taesang breathed in deeply and then reached out with his fist.

Very, very slowly.

Like a martial expert practicing a stance.

But the changes occurring inside him weren’t as simple.

—whoooosh—

The numbers that determined his strength skyrocketed as everything changed.

To fit the needs of Taesang’s every movement.

For one objective and one objective only.

Destruction of the enemy.

The slowly extended fist accelerated and by the time his arm was fully extended, it was so fast that no one could catch sight of it.

And within that short span where one couldn’t even blink an eye.

—boom!—

Moving faster than the speed of sound, his fists created a sonic boom.

Then—

Roar!

Kuooo!

The Kang-Kions that had been rushing towards them had all disintegrated.

The shockwave was so powerful that not only were the Kang-Kions destroyed, the storage area—so sturdily built that normal people could spend ages trying to dent its walls—began to break apart as well.

—rumble—

“Oh...”

“Woah...”

Akran and Taesang’s comrades’ jaws dropped in disbelief.

Taesang had been the same as them until just a while ago.

But after this short change—

He had risen to a new existence.

‘...Will it be okay?’

Akran made a worried expression.

If a person’s mental state couldn’t accept the increase in strength, there were bound to be issues.

And Taesang’s situation was just that; his strength had exponentially increased in a short amount of time.

To achieve powers that one had never dealt with before in an instant.

‘This is not fair. This is the same as cheating.’

If there really was a God, He must be a perverse one.

Akran realized the possible dangers of this change.

Since as far as he knew, humans weren’t the most benevolent of species.

And Akran frowned.

Misun then asked Taesang with a curious expression.

“Have you...really become a transcendent?”

Taesang frowned at the damage he'd wrought and shook his head.

“No, sadly I'm not.”

He knew it instinctively.

That he had not gone past the wall.

Other transcedents would've long since destroyed the boundaries between all eight runes and restructured them.

He knew that having limits in his control of the numbers was a clear answer.

Though he was many times stronger than a normal fighter, a stronger person would be able to control all the numbers that represented their strength with ease.

‘I wish there had been a bit more crystals...’

And in Taesang's eyes, the crystals of the Kang-Kions appeared.

His expression brightened up when he saw the crystals littered on the floor.

‘Will it work?’

Taesang extended his hands towards a crystal on the ground.

And to his surprise, the crystal turned into violet smoke as it entered his body.

—whooosh—

It was weak, but he felt himself getting stronger.

And as he felt this—

‘Good!’

Taesang smiled.

There were still a lot of crystals to be collected.

“I’ll head out first then!”

—whoosh!—

The quicker he moved, the more people would be able to survive.
As Taesang flew out, he absorbed every single crystal he came across.

And Akran made a gloomy expression as he watched this.

“...I don’t feel good about this.”

He didn’t know if Taesang was aware of it, but he had directly broken the rules.

Everyone had agreed that the precious crystals would be distributed and watched over.

And Taesang had devoured all of them.

Though the ones he had killed himself weren’t the issue.

‘...What about the crystals that were absorbed inside you?’

Though the man from before had forcibly shoved them into Taesang’s body, there was no doubt that Taesang was the one who ate thousands of crystals—crystals that had been collected over the years by everyone’s contributions, all with their lives on the line.

If he had some sense of responsibility, he wouldn’t have done such a thing.

And it was at this moment that a thought appeared in his head.

‘The Dark King... had he been insane in the beginning?’

That guy should have also been quite normal at the start...

Akran’s expression suddenly turned grim.

.....

—boom!—

A different type of energy surrounded the Dark King’s fist.

And seven, vicious-looking claws extended out from his fist.

Seven black claws that let out a vicious aura.

[Claws of Loongken]

A skill which focused solely on offensive power from the Loongken race, a powerful abyssal race.

This was the skill the man who had turned him into a transcendent from a normal human being living in the [Oasis] had given him.

<It's a skill that belongs in the top 100. Even higher among the attacking skills. Practice this well if you don't want to die an early death.> He had practiced madly because of those words in the beginning, but soon realized.

He had realized that there was nothing that could threaten him anymore.

Any random skill could wipe out the other humans, whereas most of the other transcedents were located near the [Oasis] in the west and had no reason to cross paths with him.

So instead of this skill, he had used random weak skills.

Since he had been proud of the fact that he could rule over everyone with such skills.

But now he had started to regret doing so.

'Will this work?'

—whooosh!—

A dark orb of light was shining vigorously to the point of exploding on the tip of Hansoo's spear, which was quickly approaching him.

But he soon shook his head and focused on his hand.

He had no reason to lose, right?

'I WILL win.

He was stronger.

He had beaten Hansoo back with even those puny skills.

With this skill, with the claws of Loongken, he could easily annihilate Hansoo in just an instant.

‘I will erase you and show the world!’

His new strength.

He would show them what he had done.

He would show the owner of the Oasis.

“Die!”

—boooooom!—

The numbers inside the Dark King were running rampant because of the [Claws of Loongken]

His fist accelerated as it ripped through space towards the spear.

Then—

Kuududududuk!

The dark orb on the tip of the spear and the claws collided.

‘I’m winning...!’

But then—

A horrifying scene occurred.

Kuduk!

‘...Huh?’

The Dark King’s expression darkened.

Hansoo’s spear, which should’ve long been destroyed, continued to approach him.

The claws, which could even break mountains apart, were shattering one-by-one as his fist started to also break apart.

‘No...NO!’

But even before the Dark King could make a shocked expression.

—BOOM!—

The spear had pushed through all obstructions and smashed into his body.

The power that had been granted to him by the Abyssal Crystals had tried to defend him, but it was all futile.

“Ahhhhh!”

The Dark King screamed in pain.

His four limbs twisted into strange angles as his intestines got compressed to a degree of implosion.

His muscles blew apart, and his bones disintegrated.

‘...No way...how...how could...I...’

He was definitely stronger.

He had the stronger skill.

But the result was the exact opposite.

The Dark King stared at Hansoo with disbelief as his body flew back and smashed into the walls of the War Fortress.

—boom!—

“Ugh...Why...?”

The Dark King barely managed to ask as he watched Hansoo walk towards him.

He wanted to know why he had lost even in the last seconds of his life.

But sadly, Hansoo did not answer him.

“Why are you asking?”

“...h-huh?”

“There’s no need for you to know anymore.”

It was the first time he had felt fearful of this voice.

And it was at this moment that the countless vicious things he had done to his defeated opponents flashed past his eyes.

Though he'd always said that the loser surrenders everything.

And now that he was in the same situation, he wanted to beat up his past self for saying so.

“Arrgh...”

The Dark King felt regret as he stared at Hansoo's cold eyes and the red energy on his hands.

‘I should not have left the city...’

The city that was located in the middle of the tundra.

The city that had protected them against the abyssal race and the other transcendent beings, like an oasis would in a desert.

<Are you really going to leave?>

‘Ekidu...Karhal.’

The Dark King made a regretful expression as he looked towards the city in the west that those two transcendents had created, and were defending with all their might.

.....

—rumble—

“Did it finish already?”

Taesang mumbled quietly as he dashed towards the War Fortress.

A tremendously loud noise could be heard in the distance.

And the silence that followed after it.

This had told him that the fight had ended.

‘But why did he tell me to come?’

He actually pondered if he should go or not.

Since he felt like he didn't really need to listen to the man's commands.

Since he'd been quite rude the entire time.

'He should at least tell me what's going on...'

But a sense of expectation drove Taesang.

Since that man might give him another reward.

That man was like an angel that had descended from heaven.

An angel that had opened up a whole new world for him.

'Hopefully this time as well...'

Taesang quickly dashed towards the War Fortress.

Chapter 314 : Beast (1)

—rumble—

‘What...What is this?’

Taesang was at a loss as he looked at the scene unfolding in front of him.

The giant War Fortress had been the main residence for those who’d first arrived at the Green Zone since it was capable of hosting hundreds of thousands of people.

This very fortress was now being demolished.

It was already very unstable due to that giant hole appearing beneath it.

How could it withstand a mountain falling on top of it?

—rumble—

Taesang realized that there was still a long way for him to go.

He’d felt like he’d gained everything in the world after setting on the path to becoming a transcendent; he’d been able to smash apart all the Kang-Kions that had come his way like ants.

That he might be closer to the level of the Dark King and the man who had given him this strength.

But that was only because he’d never fought them—that feeling of being their equal had merely been a delusion of his.

‘I’m still too far-off, huh...’

These thoughts ran through his mind as he looked at the scene of their battle.

But Taesang’s expression soon brightened.

‘Yeah, I’m just starting out.’

This was just the beginning.

Since there were no dangerous abyssal^[a]^[b] races nearby, he could slowly raise his strength by killing them, and one day reach that level.

‘But...but then, what about the others?’

His thoughts became complex as he thought of his comrades.

Should he share the crystals?

How should he share them?

‘...but is there really any benefit to me sharing them?’

He flinched at the greedy thoughts going through his mind.

How could he think such a thing?

These were people he’d fought with, comrades he’d risked his life for day-by-day, same as they did for him.

He suppressed the raging greed inside him and continued onwards.

‘...my mind is in chaos. Let’s meet that man, first.’

He focused on the reason why he’d come here.

He was easy to locate with his newly heightened senses.

‘...I just need to go in this direction, but should I really do it?’

If the man who had given him this strength had won, there would be no issues.

But what if the Dark King won?

Though he’d become strong, he was nowhere near the level of causing a scene like this.

He started to lose confidence.

‘The Dark King might be perfectly fine...’

He sensed that one of them had a much more powerful aura, and sadly, its owner seemed to be the Dark King.

Taesang pondered for a moment, and then decided to retreat.

‘Yeah, I’m not ready yet.’

He possessed unlimited potential.

He didn’t want to waste this new opportunity by dying.

He also had comrades.

If he met the enraged Dark King after heading into that place, then it would be a worthless death.

But as he was about to retreat—

...chhh...chchch...

—in the distance.

From where he was now heading towards.

A vicious aura was seeping out.

A terrifying aura that made him feel goosebumps all over.

An aura that penetrated deep into his body and mind.

He had felt this before.

Twice actually.

‘...my god. He won.’

Taesang gulped.

This was the same aura as before.

The aura he’d felt when he’d first met that man and had tried to resist.

And when the man released his aura in the storage area.

‘...it’s that red light.’

When Misun had tried to resist.

And when he was finding a candidate to become the transcendent.

A terrifying aura radiated out from the man's hand.

And that aura was the same as what he was feeling right now.

There was only one reason why he would be able to feel this aura.

It meant that the man had won.

Though the threat of the Dark King was gone, Taesang's worries did not.

‘Damn...should I have just run away?’

The vicious aura kept striking the surface of his skin.

To the point of making him think that the Dark King might've been better.

Taesang pondered if he should continue or not, but soon shook his head.

If that man wanted him dead, he would've been killed already.

And he had told him to come after digesting this new strength.

He didn't dare go against those words.

‘...f*** it, I'll go. Who knows, right? He might give me more gifts.’

Taesang thought positively as he dashed towards the origin of the vicious aura.

And soon.

A scene unfolded before his eyes.

—shshshshsh—

Dark red smoke was coming out from the man's eyes and into the seven orifices of the Dark King, who was kneeling on the ground before the man.

“Ahh.....”

Taesang exclaimed out loud when he saw this scene.

.....

“Ughh....”

“You know, I pondered for a long time about how to use you.”

The Dark King grit his teeth while resisting the blood-colored smoke that was invading his body.

‘...Damn it! Just kill me!’

But he could not speak those words.

The blood-colored smoke entering his body felt like it was gnawing away at his insides.

Hansoo continued:

“When a transcendent is born...it is hard to be a righteous person. It’s not a bad thing to become evil. It’s actually quite normal.”

It was hard to survive alone, so groups were naturally formed.

Since maintaining the group was the only way to survive, they made rules and laws for everyone to abide by.

They respected each other since they needed each other.

Even if one made another unhappy, they held back for the greater good of the group.

That was the only way.

If they fought the minute they disliked something, a group would never have been made in the first place.

But a transcendent realizes the moment that they are born that they can escape from those bindings.

“Those with strength can easily become childish. Like you.”

“Ughh...”

Transcendents were different from humans.

Maybe because they were born anew, they acted like babies.

So at first, they would carefully and slowly experiment.

They would test how their newfound strength impacted their surroundings, then wait for feedback.

And surprisingly.

There was no resistance.

Even if a transcendent did something to make the other party unhappy, they did nothing to harm him.

Social bindings?

Laughable.

This is the main point that all transcentents will eventually realize.

<These guys can no longer fight back, no matter what I do. I don't need to listen to them anymore, either> Even if their relationships worsened or crumbled apart, the result was the same.

Because they had become a transcendent, all their relationships would change.

The people they had fought with so far were no longer comrades, they were merely weights holding them back.

Since the transcentents were that much more powerful.

At this point, greed rises up inside one's mind.

Since I'm working this hard to protect you, shouldn't you return the favor?

And this mindset slowly changes.

From a feeling of want to a desire.

And everyone around the transcendent, as well as the transcendent themselves, start to realize.

That one side had to fear the other.

“Ugh...”

Hansoo continued to speak towards the Dark King in front of him.

“I was thinking about whether I should take you or not. But I feel like I should at least make one before I go.”

Once he unifies and colonizes the 4th zone, the number of people coming up through the elevator will rise, as well as the number of new transcendents being born.

Without a figure to fear, chaos would reign once again.

Those cancer-creating bastards were all settled in the west, and his comrades were fighting against them with their lives on the line.

Hansoo did not have time to oversee the others, nor could he afford the potential casualties.

So he needed to make one.

A symbol of fear.

He needed to show them.

Show them what would happen if they thrashed about just because they'd acquired power.

‘Look closely.’

Hansoo muttered, looking at Taesang.

Then—

—crunch—

“Ahh...AHHHHHH!!!!”

A tremendous scream of pain and misery roared out from the mouth of the Dark King.

.....

“KUAAAAAAAAAAA!!!”

Taesang looked in horror at the scene.

It wasn't just the screaming.

“AHH!...AHHHH!!!”

It was so painful that the Dark King was screaming while rolling around on the ground.

While all his limbs were smashed apart and his muscles had been shredded.

‘What the f***... What did he do!?’

Taesang frowned.

With a body like that, even lying down would still be painful.

And even more so if one rolled around like that.

But the Dark King didn't seem to be bothered by that, as he literally thrashed around while he howled.

—boom!—

—boom!—

The Dark King's transcendent body caused the surrounding rubble to break apart.

And then the man approached the Dark King, whispering something into his ears.

‘...what did he say to him?’

“Ugh...AHH!”

And then shockingly—

—the Dark King clenched his teeth and stood up, wearing a horrible expression filled with pain and misery.

With a hint of hope mixed in.

Then—

“Ahhhh!”

The Dark King stumbled as he started to move.

Towards the Kang-Kions in the distance.

This scene caused Taesang to feel sorry for the Dark King, despite the horrible things he'd done.

Hansoo slowly approached Taesang.

“...what did you do?”

Hansoo replied with a laugh as he looked at the Dark King dashing away, screaming as he did so.

“You’ll see.”

Chapter 315 : Beast (2)

I want to live.

.....

In the outer parts of the War Fortress.

Roaaar!

Kuoo!

The screams of both beasts and humans resonated endlessly.

“Damn it!”

“Maintain the formation! They’re rushing in!”

“What do you mean?! We need to leave before everything collapses!”

The adventurers that were fighting against the Kang-Kions were looking quite frantic.

It was obvious, actually.

In a battle between two powerhouses, they would easily be crushed apart.

It might be calm now, but it might start up again at any moment.

And since the Kang-Kions were charging towards them at a time like this, how could they not feel uneasy?

‘Damn...I need to get as far away as possible.’

—crunch—

Niclouse mumbled, smashing his fist into the mouth of the Kang-Kion that had dashed towards him.

It might count as suicidal to leave the other humans and then go out into the open field where countless abyssal beings swarmed, but this was not the time to consider such a thing.

Since anywhere else in the 4th zone was better than this place.

He needed to get as far away as possible while the Dark King was distracted.

—rumble—

‘F***...It’s another earthquake.’

The already weakened land was breaking apart by the Kang-Kions, revealing the shadowed abyss of a maze below.

Though he wouldn’t die by falling, it was easy to see what would happen if one were to fall inside there.

Niclouse smashed the Kang-Kion in front of him as he started to get even more desperate.

—boom!—

“F***...Go away, you bastard! Get lost!”

—roaar!—

But sadly, the Kang-Kion continued to charge towards him with its half-destroyed mouth.

‘God...dammit!’

Niclouse made a decision right then.

If he wasted time here, then he would die.

Since the Dark King could arrive at any moment.

‘I’ll give this to you then!’

Niclouse decided to sacrifice his right arm.

But as he was about to shove his arm into the Kang-Kion’s mouth.

—boom!—

The Kang-Kion’s head suddenly blew apart.

‘...Huh?’

While Niclouse was at a loss—

—a firm and pretty female’s voice could be heard.

“Hey, mister! Don’t just feed those things! Run!”

“...? Who?”

Nicloused asked where the voice had come from.

A face that didn’t belong in a battlefield like this.

With such beauty and strength like her’s, he should’ve seen her before or at least have heard of her once.

The female who had blown apart the head of the Kang-Kion gave a short answer.

“I’m sorry I’m late.”

The female, Misun, looked at Niclouse with a sorry expression.

A mangled body.

Even his right leg was broken.

‘...we must save as many as possible.’

—boom!—

—boom!—

Countless sounds of explosions could be heard all around them.

Through the path Taesang had cleared on the way over to the War Fortress, Akran and the other comrades of the refugee’s fortress had charged over.

“Rescue everyone as quickly as possible!”

“Move the injured! While the 2nd division relocates them, division 1 and 2 will fight the Kang-Kions!”

Kyaaaooo!

—crunch!—

Misun extended her hand towards Niclouse amidst the screams of their comrades and those of the Kang-Kions.

“Let’s go. I’ll help since you’ll be slow with that leg.”

“Uh...yes...thank you.”

Niclouse realized that he wasn’t in a situation where he could object, and leaned on Misun.

As she held up Niclouse, Misun carefully observed the surroundings.

She had to find a path of escape.

But her expression quickly darkened.

‘Damn...there’s too many.’

Though there were quite a lot of Kang-Kions that had attacked the refugee’s fortress, the War Fortress was another story in itself.

Despite numerous Kang-Kions having been shredded from the giant explosion, countless Kang-Kions still remained as they were jumping around to devour the humans.

—crunch!—

‘Damn...I knew that our numbers would increase on the way out but...’

Misun slashed apart a Kang-Kion rushing towards them.

The number of survivors would increase if they kept going, but at this rate, one out of every three were bound to die.

Maybe even two out of the three.

‘Taesang...you bastard! Where did you go?!’

Misun clenched her teeth at the thought of her comrade—they desperately needed him right now.

—rumble—

The earthquake beneath their feet started to get stronger and stronger.

‘This...!’

Misun's expression brightened up.

This was not an actual earthquake.

It was a shockwave created from a powerful being stomping on the ground.

A force that a normal human needed all their might to create was continuously being repeated as it approached them.

‘Is it Taesang?’

But as Misun raised her head with a bright expression— — Niclouse, who was standing next to her, made an expression of despair.

Full of terror.

“F***...run! Quickly, run! Run the hell away!”

“Huh?”

Misun was shocked at Niclouse's reaction, who was struggling to run away, and then also cursed after figuring out the identity behind the stomps.

“SHIT!”

—tatatata—

Niclouse and Misun both started to dash away with all the strength in their bodies.

And towards them—

—boom! boom! boom! boom! Boom!—

“UAHHH!!!!...AHHHHH!!!”

The Dark King, a demon in their hearts, was charging towards them with a horrifying expression.

‘F***...! He lost? He went there so confidently!’

Misun cursed inwardly as she ran.

Though all his limbs were broken and he was bleeding from all

over his body, his aura alone told them.

That he was still much more powerful than them.

If they got caught, they would die.

No, they wouldn't simply just die.

They would be ripped apart.

Though Misun and Niclouse ran away in fright, it was futile.

—boom! boom! boom!—

The distance between them and the Dark King was only getting shorter and shorter.

Though they ran as fast as they could, the Dark King seemed to be even more desperate than them for some reason.

And to make matters worse.

Roaaar!

The nearby Kang-Kions were charging over to them as well.

The Kang-Kions wouldn't let go of this chance; their defenses were lowered, and they were busy running away with everything they had.

“Ahh!”

—crunch!—

Uduk!

Though Misun and Niclouse screamed as they attacked the Kang-Kions in front of them, the Kang-Kions were not weak enough that they'd be defeated by their desperate attempts.

‘God...’

Misun's expression darkened as she got bitten on both her left arm and her right thigh.

Though it hadn't been cut off, there wasn't much difference.

Since the vicious aura behind them had now drawn close.

‘To become minced meat alongside these beasts...’

Misun gave up all resistance as she sensed the terrifying attack coming in from behind her.

She could not dodge it.

Then—

—boooooom!—

A huge explosion occurred, with Misun as the center.

‘...?’

Misun, who had her eyes closed, opened them when she felt her limbs becoming lighter.

And was at a loss for words.

Grr...

Kyrk...

The Kang-Kions, who had been biting onto her arm and leg had turned to dust.

And shockingly—

“AHHH!!!...UHAAAAAA!!!”

The Dark King roared his lungs out as he charged past them.

Towards the Kang-Kions in the distance.

Soon—

—boom!—

—boom!—

Rooooaar!

—boom!—

Watching this scene, Misun’s legs gave out and she fell onto the floor.

“...what the...”

They watched the Dark King, who simply ignored them and was solely focused on killing the Kang-Kions.

.....

UAHHHHHHH!!!

—boom!—

Taesang gulped as he heard the roars and the sounds of explosions from the distance.

“...will he have to live his entire life like that?”

Taesang asked while he stared at the Dark King in the distance.

The Dark King was literally fighting like a crazy dog.

Swinging around his broken limbs.

Squeezing out every ounce of strength he could from his torn muscles.

But shockingly, his expression didn't seem all that painful.

Quite the opposite, really.

Every time he managed to kill a Kang-Kion, his expression would brighten up a bit.

A very small amount at a time.

UAAHHH!!!

The slightly brightened expression quickly turned gruesome, and he soon jumped fervently towards the other Kang-Kions.

As if he couldn't even be bothered with the nearby humans.

The Dark King was clearing away the Kang-Kions way faster than Taesang could ever accomplish, and thankfully the adventurers were able to catch their breath.

To the point where his help was not needed.

And Hansoo nodded.

“Yes. Forever.”

Until he released him.

Or until he died.

He would not be able to stop this act.

Since the moment he stopped, the pain that was many times worse than being tortured in hell and all of eternity would rise up again.

His entire life would now be devoted to that.

His nose will smell the Abyss.

And his eyes will look for their traces.

His hands will smash their hearts, and his legs will constantly be forced to move to find them.

And as the Dark King flew, the Abyssal beasts were smashed apart.

Gulp.

As he stared at the crystals that were littered on the ground, Taesang asked Hansoo— “Uh...What if he absorbs those crystals? Couldn't he overpower this pain once he gets stronger?”

He didn't know what Hansoo had done, but there was an unspoken rule in the Abyss.

A skill set by a weaker party would not have much effect.

Though he was like this for now, things might change if the Dark King actually grew stronger.

Those bindings might break.

But Hansoo just chuckled.

“He can't.”

“...Pardon?”

“I made it so he wouldn’t be able to. From now on, he’ll only be a janitor.”

Taesang fell into silence.

‘...a janitor, huh?’

He was only a janitor in name.

Taesang felt like this incident with the Dark King was a warning to him and any other future transcendents. He hesitantly asked—
“Are you going to go up now? There is no reason for you to remain here...”

This man had no more opponents since the Dark King had been dealt with, at least in his opinion he didn’t.

There was no real reason for this man to stay here, right?

Though Taesang had only been in this damned world for two years, he knew one thing for sure.

To quickly become stronger, one needed to be at the appropriate location.

The strong would need to go higher.

The elevator had been created for that reason.

But Hansoo shook his head.

He would leave.

But to the west.

He wouldn’t go up yet.

He would only go up after becoming a 2-star transcendent.

‘There’s a lot of powerful guys left, still a lot to do.’

Hansoo controlled the bloody energy inside his body as he mumbled.

The world will always try to keep the balance.

And slightly disadvantageously to humans.

‘Where could they be? It shouldn’t stop at grade 3 and 4s.’

—rumble—

Hansoo looked towards the War Fortress; the commotion was now dying down.

And then towards the distance.

Towards the vast Green Zone before his eyes.

.....

—rumble—

Below the ground, in the Great Maze.

Deep down where the Ains lived in the past.

—squirm—

Something black moved about.

Grrrr...

And behind the mysterious creature, a giant tunnel that the creature seemed to have dug out could be seen.

As the mysterious creature slowly made its way towards the War Fortress, the surface shook with vibrations again.

...rumble...

The vibrations above stopped.

[...]

The mysterious black creature, after realizing the vibrations had stopped, pondered for a moment, and then turned around as if it had lost interest.

This wasn’t the only place where there was food.

Soon—

—rumble—

The mysterious creature then started to head towards another

direction.

Towards the west.

Chapter 316 : Bait (1)

Darkness had fallen over the War Fortress.

Akran and countless others were gathered in this location.

“Ugh...”

“Thanks, but... can’t you be a bit more gentler?”

The adventurers had set up a temporary camp where they rested their bodies, and helped out those who were wounded.

They had no way of going up anymore because Taesang had taken all the crystals. Either way, the injuries of those who’d been held hostage in the War Fortress were too severe.

These people had been wounded from the collision between the mysterious man and the Dark King.

Even now, there were people still being rescued from the rubble and debris within the War Fortress.

Thankfully, there were quite a lot of survivors due to their individual fortitude.

Though their conditions weren’t the best, they would heal quickly after a brief respite.

‘...those two can’t even be considered human anymore.’

Akran frowned as he looked at this scene.

A brief collision had caused all this.

Though there was a reason to hate the man who had caused this, Akran did not.

Since the Dark King’s tyranny would’ve continued without that man.

In the end, the mysterious man hadn’t been at fault.

It was all because of the Dark King; he’s the one that should be

cursed.

‘...wait. Maybe he really did get cursed?’

UAAAAAAHH!

Akran shuddered as he heard the screams of the Dark King in the distance.

In all honesty, the reason why everyone had been able to take a breather and heal up their injuries so soon was because of the Dark King.

They would’ve had to set up a defensive perimeter and keep watch in case of more attacks, but the Dark King had been dealing with all of that for now.

For some reason, the Dark King was going around massacring every abyssal beast in the nearby area.

Not even taking the crystals that dropped from the beasts.

‘Crystals...’

With a grim expression, Akran looked to the group of three sitting by a fire in the distance.

Taesang, Misun, and Lauren Bell.

The mysterious man had turned the Dark King like that, and had just simply left.

Which meant that there was nobody here that could handle Taesang.

But what the man had said to Taesang before he left was weighing on Akran’s mind.

‘What did they talk about at the end...?’

Akran stared at Taesang with a heavy expression.

.....

Taesang and his comrades were sitting by a fire.

Though they wouldn't feel the cold with their current grade of strength, this was the easiest way to get rid of the disgusting darkness.

Darkness inspired fear in everyone; even the very strong feared the darkness.

‘Well, this brings back memories.’

As she looked at Taesang, Misun thought back to her days back on earth when she'd gone camping with her friends. He was busy chewing on a piece of monster meat that they'd roasted over the fire.

He seemed to be having a lot of different thoughts.

Chewing on a piece of meat, Misun carefully asked Taesang: “So...did that man just leave? He didn't want anything from us?”

Taesang had been the only one who had talked to the man before he left.

Since the man just disappeared after making the Dark King act like that.

Taesang looked at Misun, and then quietly nodded.

“Yeah, he just left.”

“...Does he really not want anything from us? We should still be quite useful.”

Though becoming an underling wasn't great in any sense, the fact that such a powerful being had left them behind...

Taesang smiled bitterly as he replied:

“Do you really think that?”

“...”

Misun was at a loss for words.

In all honesty, she didn't really want to ask about Hansoo.

What could they do for him in a fight between transcendents?

Misun then looked at Taesang again.

‘...What’s going to happen with you now, Taesang?’

Taesang’s eyes had been glued to the crystals on the ground for a while now.

The countless crystals that the Dark King had left behind.

Misun frowned at this.

Seeing Taesang devouring all those crystals kept bothering her.

As well as his strength that was now vastly superior than average.

Maybe...

Maybe this was the last chance for him to become a transcendent.

A monster who was about to take flight.

But unlike Misun’s worries, Taesang was having different thoughts.

Thoughts about the conversation he had with the man about the crystals.

‘...A stupid question, really.’

Taesang smiled bitterly.

He was still embarrassed about what he’d asked.

<Those crystals... What happens to them now?> Taesang had stared at Hansoo with anticipation.

If he followed what the Dark King did, then he would obviously end up like him.

But what if he ate the crystals and used his power righteously?

He was embarrassed because this question had shown the man the greed that was burning inside him, yet he was still curious.

But the man looked towards the west and only said one thing.

<You deal with it.>

<Pardon?>

<I said, you handle it all.>

Then the man disappeared towards the west.

‘Ugh...’

Taesang laughed at himself as he thought back to that moment.

His expression had been extremely hopeful back then.

He felt like he had been accepted by the man.

He thought that he had received the rights to all the crystals.

Since devouring the crystals was the better option for him instead of letting everyone use it to climb up.

But after thinking for a while, he came to a different conclusion.

Taesang finished his thoughts and got up.

“Where are you going?”

Taesang smiled as he pointed towards the crystals.

“Gotta pick those up, right? Can’t leave them rolling around like that.”

Though Taesang had said it cheerfully, the expression of the others froze.

“What...what are you going to do with them?”

Taesang smiled bitterly at Lauren’s question.

‘Everyone fears me already...’

This wasn’t what he wanted.

He wanted to become strong.

But he didn’t want to be distanced from those who loved him, and whom he loved in return.

But he'd come to a realization.

That if you didn't look around yourself in your charge towards the top, there would be no one left once you looked down from the peak.

'Maybe that's why all the transcendents act alone.'

Even if they wanted to be with other people, or wish to protect their loved ones, all their relationships would eventually end up so twisted.

And he didn't want to become like that.

Thankfully, there was still a chance for him.

Taesang looked at the three, and spoke carefully.

"Well, we'll need to talk to everyone about that. After we replenish the amount of crystals I ate."

Whether they decided that he should eat them to protect them, or to use them to go up, he would agree to the wants of the others.

Maybe they might try to raise another transcendent.

No matter what, they still needed a lot of crystals.

It would take a long time, but it wouldn't matter.

'...This is the right path, right?'

Taesang mumbled, thinking of the man who had left.

Though he might become greedy, since he was a human as well.

UAAAAAAH!

The Dark King in the distance would help steel his mind from straying to that path.

Since that man could return at any moment.

Maybe even stronger than before.

Taesang then looked towards the west.

.....

—rumble—

Surprisingly, Hansoo hadn't gone far.

He had something he needed to do.

'...They took the flail, huh?'

Hansoo thought to himself, after visiting the center of the War Fortress before he left for the west.

He searched around a bit in case the Dark King had hidden it, but couldn't find it in the end.

It was probably now in someone else's hands.

Though a normal person would be burnt to a crisp once they touched the flail that was located on the mana node, there were existences that could safely grasp it.

Since he had made it possible.

'It was probably one of the transcendents.'

Hansoo decided to forget about the flail for now.

Since there was no reason to find it nor was there a method for him to track it down.

There was something else he had to deal with at this moment.

'We've arrived.'

—rumble—

Hansoo stopped to look at the castle in front of him.

It was the Keil Kingdom's refugee fortress, where Taesang, Misun, and the other refugees had previously lived.

The attack of the Kang-Kions had turned it into ruins, but he had a reason for his return.

'...It's getting on my mind.'

As to why the abyssal beasts, who went everywhere the humans could be found, had not tried to approach this area.

Even before the Kang-Kions attacked, a lot of them had hesitated.

Which meant that there was something deterring them in this place.

If that wasn't the case, then even more Kang-Kions would've attacked, which would have resulted in even more casualties.

'I must check.'

—boom!—

Hansoo rose high up into the sky and headed towards the center of the fortress.

—chijijijik!—

He gathered a tremendous amount of energy around his spear.

The Nine Dragons Spear.

—sssss—

Six dragons converged almost instantly and crept to the tip of his spear.

Then—

—BOOOOOM!—

The dark orb that Hansoo created smashed into the ground of the fortress and made a huge noise.

—rummmblee—

A single strike was all that needed to break down the fortress that had barely held on after the attack of the Kang-Kions.

But its collapse wasn't entirely due to Hansoo.

'Cave?'

There was a giant cave right beneath the fortress.

Kyaaaaak!

Suddenly, something that had been sitting below popped out, rising into the air.

A snake-like creature that seemed to have been created from a convergence of darkness.

‘An Evil Suction Beast.’

They were a solitary-type race.

If one didn’t know how to deal with them, then it was a grade 6.

If one knew how to, then it would only be at grade 4.

A race that sucked energy out of beings to empower themselves and to reproduce.

The reason why the cave could not be sensed was because the bodies of these things had been filling up the entirety of the cave, leaving no gaps.

‘...For them to be living right on top of these guys and still survive....they were really lucky.’

But soon Hansoo realized that it hadn’t been entirely due to luck.

These things had been sitting underground without coming up because they hadn’t finished eating.

As the dark snakes moved out, he could see what they had been eating.

‘...Jang Oh? He died?’

Clementine’s underling that had run from him.

And the godly artifact he held, Arham’s shield.

Though the artifact was on his wrist, his entire body looked mummified after being sucked out by the Evil Suction Beasts.

Kyaaak!

The snakes all started to rush towards Hansoo.

Chapter 317 : Bait (2)

—rumble—

Kyaaak!

The snakes that popped out from the darkness dashed forward to surround him.

Hansoo looked at the translucent snakes as he retrieved his spear, striking them with it.

—papapapapa!—

Though his attacks could easily erase a normal person without leaving behind a single trace, the snakes merely turned to smoke, which then converged back into a snake again.

And Hansoo frowned at this.

‘...They ate a lot, huh?’

Evil Suction Beasts grew stronger the more energy they consumed.

And they were from a solitary-type race, which meant their individual strengths were far higher than races which acted in groups.

—crunch!—

—crack!—

Hansoo laughed coldly as he looked at the snakes who dodged his spears and were now chomping on his Thousand Soldiers Armor.

‘How presumptuous.’

Though they were hard to deal with, they were merely at grade 4.

And with just this many, he could easily crush them with his strength.

Then—

—swoosh—

One of the snakes biting into Hansoo started to shrivel up.

The energy that it had sucked out, but had yet to digest, had instead been sucked back by Hansoo.

Well, the spirit inside Hansoo was the one that had done it.

And soon Hansoo's skin began to darken as he absorbed the energy from the shadowy snakes.

But then—

Kyaaak!

The snakes continued to charge towards him.

Though their energy was being sucked out, it wasn't to the point where they could die from it.

They just needed to crush him and suck the energy back.

—rumble!—

The snakes that had been surrounding the godly artifact, Arham's shield, all rose into the air and started to soar towards him.

—kuduk—

—kududuk—

Soon, dozens and dozens of shadowy strands started to surround him.

Then—

The energy Hansoo had sucked out from the snakes merged alongside the energy from the mana jade located in his heart.

Compressed and transformed, it soon turned into a much more destructive form.

—rumble!—

The silk-like Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement, the skill that

he'd used in the fight against the Dark King, covered his body.

And as the silk stacked on top of each other to their limits.

—boom!—

An extremely bright light exploded out from the darkness surrounding Hansoo.

Kyaaak!

Roar!

The snakes all started to disappear from the explosion caused by the Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement.

Like shadows that were lit up by light.

Like ink that was being washed away by water.

And soon—

—whoosh—

The light faded away as Hansoo started to slowly float down.

Hansoo checked his slightly dented armor, scanning his light injuries, and shrugged.

He wasn't satisfied with the amount of damage he had taken, despite having dealt with the situation quickly.

The Evil Suction Beasts were a grade 4.

They weren't strong enough to damage him like this.

If he'd been prepared, that is.

'I guess I'll need to take a break and set up some countermeasures...'

Moving about without taking the proper precautions made it annoying to deal with the solitary-type races because of their unique characteristics.

This was why the existence of other normal adventurers were important.

‘Strength isn’t everything.’

Hansoo talked to himself.

Though the transcendents and the normal adventurers thought that they didn’t need each other, that was only when the two groups were by themselves.

Once the abyssal beasts came into the equation, the whole situation changed.

The transcendents were strong.

But the abyssal race were also ridiculously strong, and if they didn’t know the methods of dealing with the peculiar solitary-type race, it could be dangerous.

And the other normal adventures were important necessities, as they helped to discover and produce the special items needed to deal with such things.

No matter how strong the transcendents were, they could not produce thousands of items by themselves.

‘Well, the situation here was a bit different.’

Things might’ve ended up differently if there were beings that threatened the lives of transcendents nearby, but there were only guppies around here.

‘It might be different in the west.’

If the humans had settled in the west, they would have made preparations for the solitary-type race as well.

But that was a story for another day.

—tatata—

Hansoo landed on the ground, collected the abyssal crystals littered around the ground and then looked towards the dried-up corpse.

Not only had his energy been sucked out by the snakes, his body

was crushed in many places from the sheer weight of the beasts.

The Evil Suction Beasts had treated his body carefully by slowly sucking out as much as they could, but he'd still ended up like this.

‘...Maybe it's Jang Oh. Maybe not.’

Hansoo picked up the shield from the corpse.

—kiiiing—

—kiing—

As he poured mana into the Arham's Shield, the light emitted from it was weak, unlike other godly artifacts.

‘At least you protected the people above.’

—clank—

Hansoo mumbled as he equipped the shield on his wrist, which had started to crazily suck in mana as if it had been starving for days.

If the Evil Suction Beasts hadn't been busy sucking out the energy from the shield, they would've long left the cave and attacked the humans above.

Hansoo gently caressed the shield and looked around for any other possible clues, but soon shook his head.

Any other traces had long been destroyed by the snakes.

If not for the Arham's Shield on the corpse's wrist, he wouldn't have even thought of Jang Oh's name.

‘If this really is Jang Oh... who's the one causing trouble in the west?’

Hansoo thought for a bit, but then shook his head.

No matter what, nothing had changed.

Since his job hadn't changed overall.

‘Well, let's go back and see if he bit the bait.’

After gently touching the shield, Hansoo then jumped out from the cave.

And soon only the corpse was left inside.

.....

In a hill a distance away from the fortress Hansoo had just left—a man was standing at its peak.

The man wore a frown on his face.

“...What is this? What happened here?”

The man was gnawing on something as he looked towards the War Fortress in the distance.

The now broken-down War Fortress.

With small dots of campfire here and there.

That place should be the territory of that Dark Knight.

Not only was he imitating Hansoo, he had even settled near the elevator.

Though he had charged over here after seeing the Kang-Kions' strange behavior, but for things to have turned out like this...

‘...Hmm. Did he fight with someone? Was there another transcendent we didn't know about?’

Those were clearly traces of a battle between transcendents.

The man frowned.

He knew about most transcendents.

And he had recruited most of them to their side.

Since the ones that didn't join them were pretending to be heroes as they tried to stand up to them.

He was going to deal with them all sooner or later, but he had never heard of somebody who could deal with the Dark King.

‘...I guess I'll need to look into it.’

The man frowned.

It wouldn't be hard to figure out.

Since he could just squeeze it out of the ones sitting by their campfires in the distance.

'Well, it wouldn't matter much if they didn't, either.'

Though there was only a fifty-fifty chance, it wouldn't matter.

It would just be a form of stress relief.

But as he was about to charge towards the War Fortress.

KUAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!

A horrendous scream could be heard.

'...the f***?'

The man turned his head towards the direction of the scream, but then was at a loss for words.

A familiar face.

'...Why is that retarded f***er doing that?'

The man frowned as he looked at the Dark King roaring loudly as he rolled around the ground.

Then the man stopped.

'...Wait. This guy seems to be quite strong now.'

They had ignored him before, because the Dark King hadn't even trained his skill despite having such strength, but looking at the man now, the Dark King seemed to be quite strong.

Apparently, he had been successful with his nursery.

But he'd still turned out like this.

Which meant that the one who had beaten him was much stronger.

'This makes it a bit inconvenient...'

And he could hear laughter from around the War Fortress in the distance.

Yo! Hahaha! Look at that bastard! How satisfying!

Haa...Life is great without that f***er, huh?

Though the echo was very quiet, the man could still hear them.

‘...F***ing insects. They dare to look down on transcendents?’

The man felt like he himself had been insulted, and veins started popping out on his forehead.

But anger could be poisonous.

The man looked between the War Fortress and the Dark King, and then backed away.

Since the one who had destroyed the Dark King could still be within the War Fortress.

With his strength, only joy was left for him in this world.

He did not want to risk his life.

‘I must report it first, and we’ll decide afterwards... you should all consider yourself lucky.’

If it weren’t for some other transcendents getting in their way, he would’ve long brought his comrades and destroyed this place.

The existence of transcendents was not something some bugs could look down on.

Even if it was the Dark King, the bugs only wanted one thing.

Someone they could respect.

A leader.

‘...How dare he.’

The man clenched his fist.

Dealing with the man inside the War Fortress would be a bit troublesome.

But seeing the Dark King become a laughingstock really pissed him off.

‘...F***ing bastard...You should be thankful.’

He gathered energy within his hands; the man decided to kill off the Dark King instead of letting him bring shame to the name of transcents.

—chzchchchzzzch—

A streak of lightning rose up from the tip of the man’s hand.

<Thunder King’s Strike>

It gathered the most violent energy in the world, that of lightning, to strike down upon the enemy.

Even stronger when used by a transcendent.

A force thousands of times stronger than a normal bolt of lightning gathered around his hand.

And this skill was even more powerful than the <Claws of Loongken> that the Dark King had used in the past.

But in that moment, the Dark King sensed the killing aura.

“Kuuu..Kuaaaahh!”

The Dark King looked towards the man with venomous eyes.

But the man merely chuckled.

“How dare a mere r*tard—no, you’re just a beast now.”

The Dark King hadn’t even trained himself, had let himself be injured and had even been suppressed.

He would be able to kill him with a single strike.

The problem was that being that was possibly inside the War Fortress.

But the man, whose entire focus was on the War Fortress as he prepared the skill, soon realized something was wrong.

Because the Dark King’s gaze was not directed towards him, but slightly behind him.

Then—

—boooooom!—

‘....Huh?!’

The man frowned at the mysterious object that had started to fly towards him from behind, and not from the War Fortress where he had put all his attention on.

.....

“They’re biting well.”

‘When will I have time to search the entire vast western region?’

—boom!boom!boom!boom!—

Hansoo laughed coldy as he dashed towards the powerful shockwaves in the distance.

Chapter 318 : Bait (3)

While he was beating up the Dark King, Hansoo thought of something.

What if the mysterious being only created the transcendents, but didn't control them?

What were those transcendents doing now?

And what would they do once they realized that there was a being stronger than them out there?

The answer was obvious.

Humans would naturally group together if there was somebody stronger than them.

.....

—rumble—

Hansoo continued dashing forward, keeping his eye on the man collecting the lightning in the distance.

After two years of being asleep, the world was not exactly in great condition.

His friends were fighting battles, while the transcendents were causing a ruckus.

And the biggest issue was the lack of information.

To fix this all, he'd need to take down the people causing the ruckus in this changed world.

'You first.'

Then—

The Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement started to surround Hansoo's spear.

The man collecting the lightning was not a simple enemy.

Though his strength alone was a bit weaker than the Dark King's, he would be harder to deal with.

Since he seemed to have completed his <Sharpening>.[a]

The man who had been preparing the <Thunder King's Strike> was at a loss.

'Wait... did I just fall into a trap?'

The man smirked.

'How dare he?'

He'd been slightly wary of the man, since he'd managed to beat down the Dark King.

But the moment he saw the person's identity, he came to a realization.

'I guess it was a very close win.'

Though there was still a difference in strength between him and the Dark King, it didn't seem to be that much.

That was more than enough to kill the Dark King.

But he himself wasn't that weak.

'Good, I'll just deal with this kid, kill the Dark King and then leave after destroying the War Fortress.'

Then—

—pajijijijik!—

The spear-shaped lightning gathering around his hand dispersed and reformed around his body, like a suit of armor made of lightning.

This form was much more efficient in a longer battle, unlike the spear which was a one-time skill.

It would be a waste of energy to probe with such a powerful attack.

Then—

—boom!—

Hansoo and the man collided.

—kaddddududuk!—

Hansoo's Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement, which had previously smashed apart the Dark King's Claws of Loongken, started to drive into the man's lightning armor.

‘Hmm.’

The man smirked.

He could easily defend from this amount of strength with his own armor.

And as soon as this kid showed a weak spot, he could just kill him off with a single blow.

But of course, there was no real need for him to block the opponent's attack with his armor.

For example, he could just block it with his weapon, or just simply dodge it.

But the man decided to retaliate instead.

‘I'll destroy you!’

The most violent energy of the world, the power of lightning.

Of course, it had the highest potential when it came to offensive power.

The man laughed as his hand moved to the weapon on his waist.

“Hahaha! With just this?!”

—boom!—

The man slashed out with a dagger he'd kept by his side, which then collided with Hansoo's spear.

Sparks and mana flew out in all directions from the collision.

‘Let’s see...’

—kadududuk!—

The man smiled as he pushed back the spear.

His opponent was not stupid.

No, he was very smart indeed.

He probably knew that his personal strength was lower, but he’d still come to fight.

Which meant that he had something up his sleeves.

And as the man expected—

—the man’s dagger pushed back Hansoo’s spear, the energy surrounding the spear exploded, forcing away the man’s dagger, and even erasing the wave of lightning.

It was similar to when Hansoo’s spear had destroyed the Dark King’s <Claws of Loongken>.

“Uuuu....”

The Dark King made a pained expression, and he groaned at the memory of his past loss, but the man simply laughed.

“Hahahaha! Amazing! How much have you refined?! Such concentration!”

Refining.

A.k.a. Sharpening.^[b]

A step for the transcendents to prepare for before going up to the next level.

Though the total amount of strength was important, refining was even more so.

‘Yeah, much more important.’

The man smiled as he thought back to the past, releasing out another sea of lightning from his body.

The past.

The mysterious being that had given him this strength and skill had left after leaving behind a single message.

Focus on a single skill.

He didn't understand back then.

Since according to common logic, it was better the more skills one had.

Though one's mastery of each individual skill would be a bit lacking, no one knew what could pop out in this damned world.

This was why it was a good thing to learn a bit of everything for every situation.

But he knew that such a powerful being had no reason to trick him, so he had listened to their words.

And soon he realized the core reason for the strength behind the transcendents.

“Look, you dumbass! Hahaha! This is how you do it properly!”

The man laughed out maniacally as he let out even more copious amounts of lightning.

Then—

—rummmble!—

—rumble!—

Thunder roared out as it smashed into Hansoo's body.

It was more than enough energy to go through Hansoo's Thousand Soldiers Armor, past his Reinforcement, and burn his body.

—chiiiiiiiik—

The Dark King, who had been watching the fight while pondering as to which side to take, was shocked at this sight.

“Ughh....”

‘...How can he be so strong?’

He had thought that strength was the most important thing, so he had continued to collect the crystals.

And the amount he had collected was much higher compared to this man fighting Hansoo, the man called <Zeus>.

But for some reason, Hansoo and Zeus’s strength seemed to be much, much stronger than his own.

‘...Which side do I take? Damn.’

And as the Dark King continued to ponder—

—boooooom!—

—Hansoo charged through the sea of lightning and smashed his spear towards the man’s head.

‘How dare you...’

Though the Dark King was weak because he hadn’t been refining properly, he himself was different.

As Zeus scoffed and was about to attack again with his dagger, <Silveril>— —shudder—

Chills ran down his back as his entire bodily senses started to scream out in danger.

Zeus then realized the black marble that was heading towards him.

‘That’s...dangerous!’

If he were attacked by that black orb, together with Hangsoo’s reinforcement, then even he himself wouldn’t remain unscathed.

Then—

Right as both attacks closed in, a strange powdered metal appeared around the man’s body.

‘Let’s go.’

Thunder King’s Strike.

A power that allowed one to become the king of thunder.

It allowed the user to freely control metal and lightning, and even turn their body into lightning itself when fully mastered.

He still had a long way to go on this path, but he could still easily control a few mere pieces of metal.

—cracklecrackle—

Around his semi-formed lightning armor, seven circular metal orbs floated.

Then—

—tatatatatat!

The orbs embedded themselves in a straight line between the spear and his armor.

And soon—

—boooooooooom!—

His metal orbs and the spear collided.

The black orb on the tip of the spear exploded and started to devour everything in the vicinity.

‘Dammit! I knew this would happen!’

The spear and the metal orbs continued to clash against each other while emitting a tremendous amount of light into the surrounding area.

Zeus grit his teeth as he continued to inject more and more energy into the metal orbs.

—kajajajak!—

—crack!—

The first three orbs were destroyed almost instantly.

But starting from the fourth orb, the speed of the spear had started to slow down.

And by the time the spear broke through the fifth and sixth orbs, it had already lost all its momentum.

The spear smashed into the seventh and final orb, but could not go through it.

And Zeus didn't miss this chance as he swung his <Silveril> towards Hansoo.

—boom!—

Again, the spear and the dagger collided together again with a tremendous sound.

—pssss—

Zeus made a content expression as he watched Hansoo being pushed back. The broken metal orbs turned back into powder and swirled around his body again.

'...Damn, that's strong. Did he just refine his attacking skill or something? These metal orbs aren't easy to make.'

Zeus frowned as he calculated the amount of metal left around his body.

A single strike was all that was needed to go through almost half of his metal powder.

Though it didn't seem like a lot, the amount of metal lost was what he'd gained after three months of slaving away the adventurers who had lived near him.

It was hard to get because the material for this metal belonged to the horns of the 8th-grade race, the <Roronoa>.

He wanted to beat up this new kid for a bit, but in the end he was the one who'd lost out.

'Should I take him? We're lacking a bit of manpower these days.'

Though he didn't like any of his so-called 'allies', it was better to be friends with somebody powerful than being enemies with them.

But Zeus decided not to after a while.

'Let's just kill him. Or take him back half-dead.'

The fact that his group hadn't known about this person's existence up till now was a little disconcerting.

And for some reason, he had an ominous feeling about this man.

—rumble—

Zeus walked forward as he focused on the dagger in his hand.

Then—

—sssshhhss—

The Roranoa powders started to align themselves onto the dagger.

Soon the dagger, which was barely the length of two fingers or so, became a longsword over a meter long.

—kiiiiing!—

Then—

—whoooosh!—

Zeus swung his sword against the man who was charging towards him again.

'I'll...smash you apart!'

—zzzzzchchzzch!—

From the previous collision, he figured out that he would be able to win.

As long as he focused and used the Roranoa powders, he could easily defeat this man.

—boom!—

His sword and the spear collided again as he created another loud noise.

And as Zeus expected—

—c-c-crack—

The silk-like reinforcement around the man started to make crackling noises as it began to crack apart.

‘Good!’

—crunch!—

Zeus smirked as he continued to push the man.

And he looked up to see the man’s face.

He wanted to see his expression of fear.

‘How dare you lay a trap...’

But then—

Zeus realized that something was terribly wrong.

What he’d seen was not a face stricken with fear.

But rather a pair of cold, cold eyes staring back at him.

Then—

—booooooooooom!—

Hansoo’s spear withdrew as he pulled back his arm.

—booom!—

Hansoo’s left arm flashed out as it blocked Silveril’s path.

A small shield on his left hand had blocked it.

And in that instant—

—booom!—

‘The hell is this!?’

A yellow light exploded out from the man’s shield and swept

around their surroundings.

And the power of lightning surrounding his body became noticeably weaker.

pssss...

The Roranoa powders he'd held in place with the lightning immediately dispersed as his Silveril turned back from a longsword to a dagger.

‘Damn!’

—clank!—

Zeus barely managed to guard against the charging shield with Silveril, all while shouting at his back.

Towards the Dark King behind him.

“You bastard! Are you just going to watch!? Come help me! Then this kid is dead!”

“Uuhgg....UAAA!”

And these words of Zeus allowed the Dark King, who had been deep in thought while still suffering from pain, to make a decision and run into the fight.

[a]Likely to be explained in the future

[b]Ill use refining from now on (sounds cooler)

Chapter 319 : Darkness (1)

The Dark King pondered as he looked at the scene in front of him.

As to which side was the correct one to take.

If he took Zeus's side and suppressed Hansoo, he would gain a chance to escape from this pain.

After all, life was the most important thing everyone had, and he would just need to threaten Hansoo to release his suffering.

But something bugged his mind.

If he helped Zeus and they still lost?

What would that man do then?

...

'...That would be terrifying.'

But the Dark King soon decided.

He could not live in eternal pain like this.

He wanted to eat delicacies, sleep with beautiful woman, and enjoy everything a powerhouse like him deserved.

Claws started extending out from the Dark King's hand.

'Kill.'

One could still get used to pain after a while.

Though he couldn't withstand the pain in his body, he'd gotten used to one thing during the past few days.

Fighting amidst the pain.

'Good.'

Zeus smiled as he saw the Dark King bring out his claws.

He didn't like being injured, he preferred to completely dominate

the other party.

And of course, having another person to fight with was always a plus.

—rumble!—

The Silveril lengthened once again.

—then—

—boooooom!—

Zeus pounced off the ground and swung his blade against Hansoo.

—crackle!—

Lightning followed the path of the blade as it smashed into the nearby area.

The sword clashed with the shield, creating sparks, and Hansoo saw the Dark King charging towards him past the shield.

Hansoo chuckled.

Of course anyone would want to escape such eternal pain.

But they should also use their brains.

Hansoo flicked his fingers and mumbled.

“Maybe you can’t think properly because you’re in pain. Shall I help you?”

Then—

—kwadddddddk!—

“Ah...Ahh...AHHHHHHH!”

The Dark King fell mid-dash, and started to scream as all his skills dispersed.

—ssssssh—

Zeus grit his teeth as he looked at the Dark King rolling around

the floor.

‘F***... I thought as much, but still.’

Of course the person who’d put on such a suppression method wouldn’t allow any forms of retaliation.

He’d tried to convince the Dark King just in case, but it seemed it wasn’t very useful.

Well, the one in pain was the Dark King anyway, and not him.

‘This is good, at least I created an opening.’

The slight opening that was caused by the finger flick.

Normal adventurers wouldn’t be able to notice and utilize this, but he could.

A tiny, tiny opening.

—crackle!—

His Silveril slid past the shield and charged towards Hansoo’s right arm.

—crack!—

A satisfying sound could be heard from his right shoulder, and Zeus smiled at this.

‘This should be good enough.’

—chzzzchchzchz!—

The tremendous flow of current surged through the Silveril.

Even though Hansoo was a transcendent, he was still a human.

If his nerves burned up and his heart stopped, he would still die.

‘I’ll make you suffer a bit more.’

Zeus didn’t focus on his heart, but rather on the nerves all over Hansoo’s body.

This would cause the pain to intensify several times more, and

could even cause paralysis.

But at that moment—

‘What the...what is this?!’

The lightning that he had poured into the other party’s body was no longer in his control.

Instead it was moving according to Hansoo’s will.

‘What the fuck?... Is this a Spirit?’

He had heard many stories about Spirits before.

But he had never heard of a Spirit that could suck out the energy of the opponent however one willed.

‘Damn... no!’

In the opening that was created when he lost control over his lightning, Hansoo smashed his spear towards his body.

Right above his heart.

—kuddduduk—

“Kuhuk!”

They were too close to each other.

The spear that penetrated through the lightning armor and his ribs continued to dig into his body.

Right into his heart.

“Huaaa....”

Zeus breathed out; somehow he was still alive, but only just barely.

—zzchchczhzz—

Hansoo, who had been electrocuted, spoke with a cold expression.

“Release this before things turn nastier.”

“ ... ”

Even he would die if his heart were penetrated.

Zeus slowly nodded and sat on the ground.

.....

‘What is this bastard?’

Zeus frowned as he looked at the man who was rapidly healing in front of him.

This man had been hit by an attack that could have easily burned any normal transcendent countless times over.

Even if he had a Spirit, the body should not be able to heal back this quickly.

The healing rate was so fast that it was visible to the eye, and his right shoulder was basically completed mended already.

‘...Is he a lizard or something?’

Zeus looked at the man that had defeated him.

He’d assumed that he was pushing that man back, but as he thought about it, that didn’t seem to be the case.

That man’s expression hadn’t changed a single time during the whole fight, and he still seemed to have many things hidden up his sleeves.

Though the man had received a lot more injuries, it now seemed that this was just his style of fighting.

Since even he would use his shield to fight if he had a cheat-like healing ability as this man’s.

‘And it even seems like he grew stronger during our fight...’

Zeus shook his head.

That wasn’t the important part.

‘What do I do now? The situation is really bad.’

At first, he'd been really worried.

Of being turned like the Dark King.

But thankfully, the man had only suppressed his mana, and hadn't turned him like the Dark King.

Well, the spear was placed right outside his heart too.

'Thankfully...wait, why am I thankful...?'

Zeus mocked himself for having such thoughts.

Even if one dodged the worst case scenario, they would still be in deep shit.

Like now.

Then—

After almost healing up, the man stood and spoke to him.

"So, how many of you guys were out there again?"

Zeus pondered for a moment.

'How should I answer so it's in my favor...'

A very short moment of thought.

But Hansoo didn't miss this.

"Yeah...things kept inside don't really come out on their own, do they?"

'Gotta squeeze them out as always.'

Hansoo smiled coldly as he started to gather a dark-red-colored energy in his hand.

The sight immediately caused Zeus to panic.

Since that was the same vicious energy currently inside the Dark King's body.

"Ahh! No!"

"Don't worry, it's slightly different."

Even before Zeus could react, the dark-red energy had penetrated into his body.

But soon Zeus realized that it wasn't doing anything, and was now confused.

‘Huh?’

Hansoo continued to smile coldly.

“I need to use you. How will I be able to use you if I turn you into that thing over there? Don't worry. This is just... well, let's just say that if I die, you'll die, too.”

“What!? You crazy bastard!”

Zeus flew into a rage.

He'd thought that he was already in one of the worst possible situations, but apparently that wasn't the case.

And he knew that what the man had said was true.

The dark-red energy squirming around his heart and his brain proved it.

Hansoo laughed at Zeus.

“How about it? Have your thoughts changed since we're now in the same boat?”

“F***ing hell...”

Zeus sighed.

‘Crazy bastard... I don't know what he's thinking, but I hope he lives a calm life...’

“What are your goals? I need to know your goals to answer your question. I should at least know what you want since we're in the same boat, right?”

Hansoo nodded at these words.

“Simple. I need a lot of people like you. As many as possible.”

Hansoo was planning to fish out every last one of them.

And if this guy told him their locations, things would become even easier.

And the moment Zeus heard this, he grit his teeth.

‘F***, this one is going to be trouble.’

Out of the eleven out there, none of them were easy targets.

He grit his teeth as he predicted a future of himself becoming a meat shield for this bastard.

He would need to do his best in that case.

Since his comrades, no, they were his enemies now, weren’t easy to deal with.

‘What the hell is this guy’s identity?’

Then—

Something flashed through his mind.

The mumbles of the being that had given him and his allies their strength.

<I need you guys to grow well...only then will you be useful to me when I kill that Kang Hansoo.> ‘...Their sizes are completely different. Were they the same person?’

But for some reason he felt suspicious.

Someone who had appeared out of nowhere.

A similar outfit.

And the golden spear in his hand did not look simple.

Zeus cautiously asked just in case.

“...Are you perhaps that Kang Hansoo?”

Hansoo didn’t reply to his question, but Zeus knew.

That he was Kang Hansoo.

And the moment he realized this—

‘F***ing hell...’

The one who had turned him into a transcendent seemed to be half crazy, but one thing was clear.

They felt an Intense amount of rage towards Hansoo.

And he was sure that the being had ways of finding out if Hansoo had come back or not.

Then—

Zeus’s eyes turned to the War Fortress.

‘...Was that the reason why he put the Dark King around this area?’

Zeus grit his teeth.

.....

The normal adventurers in the War Fortress were gossiping amongst themselves.

They couldn’t handle this intense feeling of unease.

“F***...What exploded this time?”

“...Why are those guys not climbing up if they’re that strong already? Why are they causing chaos around this area?”

They thought that everything would end after the Dark King had finally been dealt with, but something else had occurred just a few days after.

Though they were quite a long distance apart from the battle, the shockwaves from the thunderstorm could be felt in their area.

Though the man had won again, there were no guarantees that the man would continue to win.

Of course they couldn’t bear this constant lingering sense of danger.

One of the people asked Akran.

“...Can’t we just go up or something? Damn it all.”

Akran scoffed.

“Does anything change if we go up?”

“...”

The man fell into silence.

It was true.

No matter where you go, if you yourself weren’t strong, nothing would change.

Akran spoke to the man who had fallen silent.

“This is a chance for us to raise our strength, remember? That man is not our enemy.”

The man turned around with a grim expression.

‘Though he’s not a enemy...’

That man was not like the Dark King.

He had given them a chance to become stronger.

But that didn’t help his fears from going away.

‘...That man is actually more fearsome.’

Though the transcendents, who they could not handle, were terrifying.

That man was even more so, since he was hunting those very transcendents.

Any power that wasn’t under one’s control was a symbol of fear.

Then—

Somebody approached Akran and spoke.

“Uh...I think you’ll need to come over for a bit.”

“What’s up?”

The adventurer spoke carefully.

“...One of the captured underlings of the Dark King escaped.”

“What? How?”

Akran frowned.

Chapter 320 : Darkness (2)

“Haa...haa...”

—rumble—

Garp mumbled as he ran; he was one of the underlings of the Dark King who'd been held captive in the depths of the War Fortress.

‘Damn...didn’t expect it to be this strong.’

Garp stared at the smoking piece of gem he held in his hand.

chiiiiii...

With just a single use, he was able to blast a hole from the jail cell to the maze underground.

His mana was sealed and the jail cell was sturdy, so he had no means of escaping it normally.

This gem was a result of vastly advanced alchemy.

Garp thought of the being who had given him this gem.

<Look after the Dark King well. If you continue to do so, then... sooner or later that Kang Hansoo guy will come find him. Kehehe...he’ll be curious to know how the world has changed. If you find him, then come find me...I will give you the same strength as the Dark King when you do.> This was why he’d stayed by the Dark King.

Since he had nothing to lose.

It was better to act like the Dark King’s lackey than going about randomly and getting killed anyway.

And in a corner of his mind, he slightly wished that Kang Hansoo wouldn’t come.

But he really did.

<Haha! He came! Kang Hansoo himself really came!> From the

crazed shouts of the Dark King, there was a strong chance that Kang Hansoo really had arrived.

And soon he reached the <Flier>.

‘Good.’

After he sent this off, then everything would be over.

He knew a lot would happen once he carried it out, but that did not matter to him.

—clank—

Garp picked up the abyssal crystal he’d hidden next to the Flier.

Just enough to send one person up.

He just needed to use this and get on the elevator.

That being had told him:

<If you go up...tell them my name. They’ll treat you well. They’ll give you strength, as well.> —flutter—

Garp smiled as he looked at the Flier soaring through the air.

.....

‘Damn, that guy is also half mad.’

Zeus frowned.

He started to calculate at a rapid pace.

‘...If that being comes into play, then things will get very dangerous.’

It was dangerous since he didn’t know the true identity of the being.

He didn’t know how and when that being would strike at them.

Which meant that he needed to direct Hansoo towards victories for now.

Since he’d also die if Hansoo were killed.

And to win?

The answer was simple.

Hansoo getting stronger.

And he himself getting stronger.

Zeus thought up to this point, and then asked Hansoo.

“...By the way, why didn't you squeeze them dry?”

“Huh?”

Zeus asked, his expression confused.

“I mean, think about it, those things are very useful.”

Him and the other eleven had formed an alliance to gain and increase the amount of slaves they had.

A person with a large territory could get stronger at a rapid pace.

From creating materials to going against the peculiar races, as well as collecting the abyssal crystals, they could rule over other people and force them to do so.

‘Yeah... we are Gods.’

That was why they'd thrown away their past names and renamed themselves.

It was a bit cringey, but they had followed the words one of them had said.

The normal adventurers paid them tribute, and the transcendents protected them.

A win-win for both sides.

Then Zeus realized that this could be a chance for him.

‘...Yeah. There's no better place to gain more slaves than here.’

This location, where the abyssal race and the newcomers continuously poured out, was the best place to raise their individual strength in the most efficient manner.

Zeus spoke to Hansoo.

“Group them up and control them. Why are you busying yourself? You can just make them into your slaves and make your life easier.”

In this world, strength was basically the law.

The reason why he and the other eleven struggled so hard to get stronger was because they had already encountered even stronger beings.

But Hansoo merely scoffed at Zeus.

‘Crystals... they’re a convenient item.’

A convenient item, indeed.

And he wanted other people to use them to get stronger.

He was different than them.

He, who had already gained the rights.

And they, who needed the crystals to climb higher.

Of course he would also get stronger much faster if he used that spear.

He could probably go up through the Blue and Indigo zones faster as well.

But that wouldn’t do.

If he did this, the final barrier would block him.

‘You should know how lucky you are.’

If he needed crystals, Zeus would’ve long been dead.

Since they’d need to fight over the crystals anyway.

—crack—

“Ugh...”

Zeus cried out as he felt the grasp on his throat tighten.

‘This maniac.’

Though Zeus also preferred to think with his fists more often than not, this Hansoo guy was just too much.

Weren’t they in the same boat?

“Hey... even if you did win, aren’t you being too unreasonable? Damned bastard...”

Hansoo had clearly said that he was useful.

If Hansoo really needed him, then shouldn’t he at least treat him like a human being?

Then—

Hansoo tightened his grip even more.

“Maybe there’s a misunderstanding. We aren’t equals just because we’re in the same boat.”

—crash—

“Huhuuk! Haa...Haa.”

“I steer the boat, you row it. Got it?”

Zeus attempted to retaliate by using the Thunder King’s Road, but then realized he couldn’t due to the red energy surrounding his heart and his brain.

His rage instantly died down as he felt the energy surrounding his heart.

‘...I’m in some deep sh*t now. Damnit.’

Hansoo looked at Zeus’s eyes and realized that it was the right time to speak.

Hansoo sat next to Zeus and asked.

“...You seem to be in a hurry. Why?”

Zeus’ attitude was not that of an attacker.

But rather that of a defender.

Hansoo was curious at Zeus's actions—he acted like something was bound to come chasing after them.

“...”

“You know, it's possible that I could slow down, too. What do you know?”

Zeus frowned, but told Hansoo all he knew.

.....

‘...Who could it be?’

Hansoo frowned.

He wondered which one of his enemies would want him dead that badly, but he couldn't quite put a finger on it.

Someone that strong would've left an impression on Hansoo if they'd ever met.

‘Is it Jang Oh? If I hadn't just seen that corpse, it wouldn't be this confusing.’

He was puzzled by the mysterious corpse that could've been Jang Oh.

At this moment, Zeus spoke out carefully.

“...Let's just go up, man. Damn it, it's not that hard to go up.”

Zeus mumbled.

Though he had his own territory here, it wasn't as important as his own life.

Though he didn't know what lay above, two transcendents should be able to survive.

The Abyssal Crystals—the tickets for the way up—they were a joke to acquire anyway.

But Hansoo only chuckled.

“What are you thinking about?”

“Hmm?”

“I have friends who I know will help me.”

“What? Who?”

Zeus asked in shock.

‘...He had friends?’

That changed everything.

“Who? Can you bring them?”

Hansoo shrugged at Zeus’s words.

“Depends on how you do.”

“...F***.”

Zeus grit his teeth as he realized who Hansoo’s ‘friends’ were—they were his own allies.

Hansoo continued to speak with a smile.

“Come on, say who your allies are.”

These guys knew each other for sure, and Hansoo wanted to know everything about them.

Where they lived.

Which skills they used.

What their weaknesses were.

What they did with their territories.

“I’ll add your friends if you do. I told you, I’m only steering the boat and you would be rowing... Isn’t it better to row together with your friends rather than alone?”

“...”

Zeus’s expression turned nasty.

And after a short period of thought, he spoke.

“F***...fine! I’ll tell you everything! I’ll tell you, but... let’s use

those guys over there at least!”

He started out calm, but he was shouting by the time his sentence ended.

Hansoo continued to just stare at him, so he started pointing at the War Fortress and shouted: “Why! Why aren’t you using them!? You have to live, right? Huh? Look how useful they are! They can be laborers, scouts and...and even meat shields! Shouldn’t you utilize everything at your disposal to win!?”

Their opponents wouldn’t be easy.

No, his allies, all eleven of them, were tough nuts on their own.

He didn’t want to die yet.

‘Meat shield...’

Hansoo chuckled.

“This is why I like you guys.”

‘Eres, you told me before. That... that I should not kill them.’

But a small voice came out from the depths of his mind.

<How long are you going to continue this clown act? To only amount to this much after two years of sleep...> Hansoo chuckled at the whispers of the Pandemic Blade’s seed.

‘This is all because of you anyway, it’s basically all done. Besides... who could it be?’

Hansoo looked to the west.

.....

The Flier flew through the air and continued to head west.

Past a city with humans.

Past a village with a small population.

Towards the far west.

The capital of the Empire.

—rumble—

A man was standing where the Empire's Capital had once been.

In the middle of the White Dragon Arena, where Tiamet had stood and absorbed the enemy.

—flutter—

The moment the flier landed, the stone-like expression of the man altered slightly.

‘What is this?’

The man walked up to the paper and read it.

Then—

The man's expression brightened up.

“...Finally.”

‘Where have you been sleeping, Kang Hansoo?’

He had found him.

Finally...

‘Good, it seems that I'll be able to avenge you, Jang Oh.’

—crack!—

The man smiled as he smashed the white Rangkom's Stake into the ground.

And then—

D-D-D-D-Diii

The mana node which flowed through the entire continent started to reverberate.

Chapter 321 : Darkness (3)

As the man drove Rangkom's Stake onto the ground, the mana node started to shake.

—brrrrr—

The man smirked as he felt the vibrations.

He sensed that the giant seal blocking the five senses of 'it', which flowed through the mana node, had been released.

'Good, I hope he likes my gift.'

A gift only had value if there was a person to receive and if the person receiving it had been surprised by it.

So he had hidden it.

Until the time was ripe.

And now—

—the person to receive the gift had arrived.

Right now was the perfect time to gift it—when the receiver had no idea about it.

—rumble—

The man continued to smile as he felt the vibrations ringing from the depths of the earth.

'It begins.'

Nurture.

The ones nurturing others never realize that they're being nurtured at the same time.

Evil devoured other evil things to become a bigger evil.

And to raise a larger evil—

—you needed a lot of small ones.

‘You all grew well, right? You should’ve...since I’ve only picked the good ones.’

People who didn’t care about anything else in order to raise their own strength.

People who wouldn’t bat an eye at someone else’s pain for their own advantage.

He had specifically chosen those types since they would have the quickest growth.

The man smiled as he thought of the ‘seeds’ he had planted.

.....

Amidst a field about 1,300 kilometers away from the War Fortress.

In the middle of the Empire’s border city of the past, two people stood atop a guard tower.

Then the man looked towards the woman with sharp facial features.

“Woah, Demeter. You built a nice city.”

The woman called Demeter frowned as she spat back her reply: “I said not to call me that, it makes me uncomfortable. Call me by my name. Ugh, why did Miguel suggest we do this...?”

The man continued to smirk as he replied.

“Why? I like this idea of Zeus’s very much.”

“...Grow up. Please.”

The man shrugged as he spoke:

“Just ignore Zeus entirely then. He was the one who suggested we build the city as well. Look, look at how well you built the city.”

The man looked towards the vast city below them as he chuckled.

The man was called Hermes.

His hearing and sight were considered top class even among the transcendents.

And in his eyes—

—he saw everything in their surroundings within a hundred-kilometers radius.

—boom!boom!boom!boom!—

The first thing that caught his attention was the thing right below them.

There was something continuously making noise below the guard tower.

Somewhere behind the walls, hundreds of malnourished people were slamming at something with hammers.

Countless materials were being mixed together, and melted down with flames.

Metals were turned into weapons, while other rare materials were turned into useful objects for the transcendents.

‘Mmm....this is one thing I did better than Demeter.’

Hermes continued to look around with a content expression.

Towards the vast icy plane past the castle walls.

<Ahhhh!>

Screams of rage and pain continued to echo out.

<F***! Kill it fast! If we don't fill up our quota of Dakramas by today, then we'll get sent to the Nursery!> <You bastard! If you're going to die anyway then at least attack them once before you fall! We're all about to die because of you!> <F***! At least act as a meat shield!> Thousands of adventurers had spread out around the icy planes to hunt.

For materials to be used in alchemy.

Of course, if he, a transcendent, fought with them, it would be

easier for them to hunt, as well as much safer.

But no that wouldn't do.

How could they, who'd reached the level of gods, do such a trivial task?

Plus, they had something else to do anyway.

<F*** It! I can't do this anymore! I'm leaving!> <You bastard! Where are you going?!>

'Oh? Running away?'

Hermes whistled as he looked to Demeter.

Though he didn't need to tell her, he wanted to get on her good side whenever he could.

"Filthy bugs."

Demeter's expression turned dark.

Then—

She slammed her foot on the ground.

—crunch!—

—crackle!—

Revealing a power that was similar to what Hansoo had displayed by using his Spirit.

Then—

—kakakakakak!—

<Kuaaaaaahh!>

A giant metal pillar shot out from beneath the man who was trying to run away and pierced right through him.

And shockingly, the man didn't die.

<Ahh...>

Hermes shrugged at this scene.

He knew why she hadn't killed the man.

'So thrifty.'

The man who had run would soon realize that he should have just died back then.

Since he would soon be dragged to the nursery.

'But, anyway... where did she put it?'

Previously, it seemed to have been in the upper regions of the city, but now it had apparently disappeared.

But after a moment of searching, the man realized where it was.

It was right below them.

Deep below them.

<Uaaaaahh!>

<Ahhhh!>

Screams continued to echo out from deep underground.

Screams of humans being ripped apart by abyssal beasts.

'She complained about it being ugly... I guess that's why she moved it underground...' 'Demeter... how venomous, this is even bigger than mine.'

He thought he had a pretty large nursery, but Demeter's nursery was at least twice the size of his own.

He himself filtered out pretty females to make a harem, so he had a certain order around the city, but Demeter seemed to despise all humans.

To Demeter, all other normal beings on this floor were slaves that could create weapons for her, and deliver her the Abyssal Crystals.

'...She'll get stronger much faster than me at this rate. I guess I'll need to go back and expand my nursery.'

Strength was law.

Though they had formed an alliance out of fear for the being who'd made them, if the balance of strength between them were to break, who knew what would happen?

‘What’s going on inside that guy’s head anyway? Why were we given freedom...?’

Well, it was a good thing anyway.

Since they were given time to grow stronger.

‘Yes, we must get stronger.’

At this point, Hermes was speaking with a slightly annoyed voice.

“Why aren’t Hades and Zeus coming?”

The reason he’d come was for a meeting.

The topic of today’s meeting was to discuss the issue of Ekidu and Karhal.

And how they would erase them.

Though they’d merely been pressuring them up until now because they were too lazy to fully deal with them, those two bastards continued to be an annoyance.

Since it had come to this, they were going to uproot them entirely.

‘And...they seem to be getting stronger even faster than we are, despite not utilizing their territory...’

Hermes had traded blows with Karhal recently, and his right hand was still throbbing from pain.

Then—

—rumble—

‘Hmm?’

Hermes frowned at the minute vibrations that rang out from deep under the ground.

Hermes stole a glance at Demeter.

‘Did she not feel it?’

Apparently, Demeter hadn’t felt it.

Well, it made sense.

Even he, the one with the most heightened senses, had barely felt it due to his focus on the nursery.

Very minute vibrations that had originated from very far away.

‘What...’

Hermes was about to mention it to Demeter, but then, he didn’t need to.

Since the vibrations were getting stronger by the second.

And soon even Demeter could feel it.

“...What the hell...is this?”

The vibrations were getting increasingly stronger.

They thought that something had blown up beneath the earth, but soon they realized what was really going on.

The vibrations weren’t getting stronger, but rather the thing causing it was getting closer.

At a tremendous speed.

—rummmble!—

‘It’s coming through the mana node!’

“F***! What the hell?”

Demeter shouted out in shock.

The aura of the mysterious thing heading towards them was extremely vicious and evil.

To the point where she couldn't determine what it could be.

Demeter pondered for a bit and then spoke to Hermes.

"Let's run away."

"Run away?"

Hermes clenched his teeth.

'Can we even get away?'

The mysterious thing was moving way too fast.

To the point where he'd barely be able to escape even at his fastest speed.

Demeter nodded.

"Yeah. With your skill, you could move fast enough even if you carried me."

"..."

Demeter clenched her teeth as she looked at the silent Hermes.

'This bastard. He's always nagging at me to sleep with him, but...'

It seems the moment their lives were on the line, even Hermes was having second thoughts.

But there was nothing else she could do.

Though she was stronger in terms of strength, she was much inferior when it came to speed.

Demeter shouted at Hermes:

"If we get out of this, I'll grant you one wish, so... let's just try running away first."

Hermes pondered for a moment but then shook his head as he lifted Demeter up.

'Let's just think of it as doing some charity work. I'll be getting a wish anyway.'

He had slept with countless beautiful women.

What he wanted now was a strong woman.

A woman even stronger than himself.

‘...Though that Ekidu girl is who I really want, this is still good enough.’

“Let’s go.”

—rumble—

The wind spirits started to gather beneath Hermes.

And the space beneath his feet folded onto itself.

But right at the moment when Hermes and Demeter looked close to flying off— “Wait.”

“Huh? Why?”

Demeter urged Hermes on after he had stopped.

That mysterious thing was charging towards this place at a tremendous speed anyway.

While releasing that terrifying aura that pricked her skin.

She wanted to leave as fast as possible, but why had he stopped?

Hermes smiled at Demeter.

“Dumbo. We need to clean things up before we leave, right?”

Then—

—rumble—

Demeter extended her feet and slammed down onto the ground.

—rummmble!—

Thousands and thousands of spikes shot up everywhere within a radius of a few kilometers around them.

Right from beneath the feet of the adventurers.

—kwadddduk—

—kaduk—

<Kaaaaaah!>

<Ahhh! Why?!>

<Why are you doing this?...Ah! We finished our quota!> While Hermes was shocked by the noise, Demeter just lifted her feet and said: “Let’s go. It’ll take a bit of time for that thing to eat all of this.”

Hermes smirked.

“What a smart girl.”

‘Sexy.’

Then—

—boooom!—

The guard tower that they’d been standing on blew apart, and their bodies instantly turned into a dot in the distance.

Ahhhh!

Uaaahhh!

The only thing left behind were the adventurers who were still screaming.

.....

“Look at this, Sir Kang Hansoo.”

Hansoo frowned at what Akran had hurriedly brought over.

A dark piece of rock.

“You found this in the maze?”

“Yes, more specifically, near the mana node that passes through the maze.”

Hansoo mumbled as he looked at the dark piece of rock that some lifeform had created.

‘I wondered why there were no higher grade races...’

With this around, no other races could really settle down.

“Someone seems to have the same thoughts that I did.”

‘...The same thoughts?’

Zeus looked confused by Hansoo’s words.

Chapter 322 : Ark-Roa (1)

There were countless strange creatures and races.

But no matter where one went, there was always a higher mountain among the races.

.....

Hansoo continued to look at the dark rock in his hand as he spoke to Zeus.

“There’s something you need to do.”

“Something I need to do?”

Hansoo nodded.

“You said you guys had a way to contact each other, right?”

Zeus nodded.

Though most of them preferred going solo, they still had forms of communication since they were in an alliance after all.

After seeing Zeus nod, Hansoo continued: “Tell them all to gather here if they want to live.”

Zeus frowned at this.

Hansoo’s expression had always been very carefree.

Even while fighting against him, Hansoo had never lost his composure.

Even when he told Hansoo that there were twelve of them, Hansoo hadn’t seemed scared but rather excited to beat them all up.

But right now, Hansoo was making a very grim expression.

‘What is this...?’

While Zeus was quietly trying to figure it out, there was someone who couldn’t hold back his curiosity.

“What is this anyway?”

Akran’s expression was full of worry.

‘... I didn’t want to get tangled with these guys.’

Akran really, really did not want to get tangled with the transcendents.

But after seeing these tracks, he couldn’t ignore it.

The tracks of something that had passed by.

The tracks left by that mysterious creature stood out so much that everyone could figure out which direction it was heading to.

But the scouts did not dare.

The vicious and greedy aura left behind in those tracks were terrifying enough.

Not to mention the hint of gluttony mixed in.

And shockingly, there was no aura of craziness or evil that they normally felt from a transcendent.

This made it even scarier.

Since this thing wouldn’t hesitate for even a moment before it devoured them.

As if the reason for its very existence was to eat.

So Akran had come to find Hansoo.

He felt like Hansoo would know about it.

Hansoo crushed the stone in his hand and spoke: “Ark-Roa.”

“...Ark-Roa?”

At least back when he roamed around the Abyss, the other races called this race the Ark-Roas.

The dark shadows.

They didn’t have actual bodies or even any form of conscious.

Just pure gluttony.

“...Damn. All sorts of damned things exist, huh? Is there only one? Do these things reproduce as well?”

Akran, and those nearby, frowned at Zeus’s question.

One was terrifying enough.

If these things covered the world, then they wouldn’t be able to survive.

But Hansoo shook his head.

“It can’t reproduce.”

“Phew...”

But Hansoo continued to speak.

“Because this is only a baby.”

“Baby?”

Hansoo nodded.

“Well, not really a baby in biological terms, but...more like an egg. It will reproduce after it fully grows up...Yeah, it cannot reproduce. Yet.”

“...What? This is an egg?”

Zeus mumbled, sensing the terrifying aura that radiated from the stones.

At least according to the biology they knew, eggs were weaker than babies.

An existence that can only protect itself with its hard shell.

But an egg that was this strong?

‘...What would it be like if it hatches?’

As Zeus and the others gulped—

—Hansoo was having different thoughts.

‘...What an unfitting place for it to descend.’

Ark Roa.

If this thing was let loose and allowed to freely devour and evolve...

It could chew up dragons for breakfast, and the demon kings as dessert.

And even Hansoo had only seen one that was fully grown in his previous life.

One <Ark-Roa> had been able to grow while the races of the 6th level of the Abyss were fighting each other.

By the time the other races realized its existence, this thing had grown to the point where it didn't need to hide itself anymore.

And realizing the situation, all other races came to a ceasefire and united under a single banner to get rid of this one monster.

They had won in the end, but the number of beings on the 6th floor of the Abyss had been reduced to a fourth of its original population.

All from fighting a single Ark-Roa.

So all the races would instantly destroy them as soon as they detected it while still in its infancy, and thus, weaker.

Because of its terrifying potential, it was a race that had reached the point of extinction.

That was the Ark-Roa.

Of course it didn't belong here.

The place for this thing was the Abyss.

The Abyss where countless races fought amongst each other inside the humongous dimension.

‘...Maybe it could come down because it was an egg.’

Though the elevator seemed to send down anything that came its way, it abided by one strict rule.

The objective of the elevator wasn't to annihilate the humans, but rather, to watch them fall into misery and despair.

So naturally, there was really a limit to who could come down.

Which meant that this thing really was an egg.

An egg that had been beaten halfway to death, and the weakest amongst its race.

Which made it even more dangerous.

Since a weakened foe was bound to be more aggressive.

Though he didn't know why it had been calm up until now, it would soon devour everything once it started to move.

To evolve past an egg.

To gather nutrients to be born as a baby.

"So hurry and tell your comrades. Tell them to gather here if they don't want to get killed."

Then—

Zeus made an understanding expression as he spoke: "So you're throwing the others away, right? Only taking the useful ones."

Akran's expression turned dark.

And Zeus smirked.

'No matter how good you act...you're still a transcendent.'

But Hansoo cut Zeus off.

"The normal adventurers don't need to worry about it. The rest of you do, though."

"Huh?'

Hansoo chuckled.

“Have you ever seen a lion lick up ants off the ground?”

.....

—rumble—

“Haaa...Haa...”

‘This should be enough.’

Hermes dropped Demeter down after reaching the guard tower of his city and sighed out.

—crackle—

The dimensional crack that he’d gone through could still be seen behind him.

‘Ugh, all that running is making me real tired.’

It had really been a very long time since he’d run that madly.

It was even more strenuous since he’d been carrying a person along the way.

But Demeter looked worried as she got down from Hermes’s grasp.

“Why did you come here? Why didn’t you go further?”

Demeter and Hermes’s territories were the closest.

Since Hermes settled near her.

Of course it was still a little bit over a hundred kilometers away, but thinking back to that thing’s speed made her worried.

But Hermes chuckled as he grasped her shoulder.

“Why are you in such a rush? You said you’d grant me a wish.”

‘This horny bastard...is that why you came here?’

Demeter frowned inwardly, but soon nodded.

Since she needed him nearby to run away.

‘Well. Let’s just think of it as a form of payment.’

She didn't really dislike Hermes either, and she felt like they had enough time anyway.

It would take some time for that thing to eat all those bugs, and come all the way over here.

And plus, there was a lot of food beneath them as well.

Right as Demeter was about to hold Hermes, who was slowly approaching her— “Ah, one moment. How rude of me. Go wait below, and let me prepare something.”

“...?”

Hermes backed off as he jumped down from the tower.

‘...What did he prepare? He seems to be much more romantic than I'd thought.’

But the moment Demeter sat on the bed.

—shiver—

A chill ran down her back.

Something was approaching them quietly.

From below the very tower where she was in now.

Then—

—boooooom!—

The sound of a huge explosion blew out from where Hermes had jumped down to.

The sound of activation for Hermes's skill, <God of the Skies>.

And Demeter realized what had happened as she roared out loud.

Hermes had detected it a step before she did.

That the thing had been silently chasing them the whole time.

“You f***ing bastard! How dare you use me as bait!?”

—boom!—

It was too late to run.

Demeter quickly slammed down her foot as she felt the terrifying aura charging up towards her.

—rumble!—

The tower collapsed as thousands and thousands of spikes shot out and started attacking the monster.

But it was too late.

—kudududududuk!—

The thing that had made her and Hermes run in terror had charged through the spikes and chomped off her lower body.

“Uahh!!...Uhh...”

She knew the moment she got bit—

—that she wouldn’t be able to survive.

The lower part of her body that had entered its mouth quickly disintegrated, and was sucked away.

Towards another area in its dark body.

Krrrrrk.

Urrrk.

Demeter was at a loss as she looked at the creature that was devouring her.

It wasn’t some dumb monster.

‘It learned, huh? That we wouldn’t run if it did that.’

She didn’t know where this thing had come from, but it seemed like the other creatures that lived nearby this thing previously hadn’t been able to run away from it in time, and it hadn’t realized that things could actually run away.

Which was why it had openly charged at them in the beginning.

But as soon as it sensed them running, it changed its tactics.

It hid its aura and launched a sneak attack instead.

Kwaaaaaaa.

‘F***ing...bastard.’

Her eyes filled with hate, Demeter looked towards the direction Hermes had run off.

She then slowly closed her eyes with a smile.

‘...At least everyone else will also get killed. Let’s all meet again inside its belly.’

As she left that curse behind, Demeter lost consciousness.

And as her body was devoured, the surface of the dark Ark-Roa changed colors and transformed.

.....

“Hurry up.”

Hansoo spoke towards Zeus and Akran.

They didn’t have a lot of time.

Akran gulped as he nodded.

According to Hansoo’s stories, this world would end if that thing was allowed to grow up.

‘Damn...Why is he making me do this?’

Zeus frowned as he retorted:

“...What are you going to do while we do this?”

Hansoo replied with a short answer.

“I’m going to end this.’

<You’re finally willing to stop acting like a clown> The seed’s voice rang out within his mind.

Chapter 323 : Ark-Roa (2)

—rumble—

Hermes looked back to where his territory had been as he wiped off his cold sweat.

“Haa...Ha...”

If Demeter had noticed it before he did, then he would’ve become its food instead.

Since Demeter would’ve made the same choice he did.

‘Don’t hate me that much...’

Hermes sighed as he pondered.

As to what he would do.

But he didn’t need to think about it that long.

‘Why am I even thinking about all this? I just need to go up.’

This was good actually.

That crazy thing would be running around while hunting for beings like himself.

Rummaging through this entire world.

Once it devoured all the transcendents in this world, it would then turn to the normal adventurers.

‘This is going to become a land of the dead.’

Hermes decided to head towards the elevator right away.

Though it was a shame to throw away his painstakingly created territory, it was better than being killed.

He could always make a new land after going up anyway.

But then—

—pararararak—

Hermes frowned as he felt something flying towards him.

‘...This Flier is for emergency contact only... Did the others notice it as well?’

Then it would become troublesome.

Since he would only be able to escape to the elevator if the others acted as bait for him.

If everyone headed towards the elevator, then it was obvious where that monster would go to.

After reading the message, Hermes sighed in relief.

It seems they hadn’t found out yet.

But the message was still shocking.

‘...Zeus? You’re asking for help?’

Hermes was actually surprised.

This guy would never ask for help even if he was tortured.

But Hermes shook his head.

‘Why should I?’

Of course they were on friendly terms.

But there was no reason for him to when he was about to go up.

That monster he’d encountered was too terrifying for him to stay any longer than necessary.

‘F***ing dumbass. Captured? What the hell happened to you? Just deal with it yourself.’

Nobody would respond to Zeus anyway.

Hermes chuckled after deeming none of his comrades to be useful, and he charged towards the elevator using his <God of the Skies>.

.....

—rumble—

Hansoo checked the status of his body after moving about a hundred kilometers away from the War Fortress and into the tundra.

There were no signs of life nearby.

Well, there were non-humans.

Kiiiing.

A Dakrama charged towards the cave where Hansoo was standing.

But after sensing Hansoo's horrifying aura, it immediately made a U-turn and ran away.

The dark red smoke slowly drifted out of his body.

And Hansoo chuckled at the sight.

It had made a wise decision.

There was a reason why he'd headed so far away from the War Fortress.

If he failed here, then everything in the nearby vicinity would be annihilated.

If he failed, then his body would become a humongous living weapon.

The Pandemic Blade's soul spoke to Hansoo.

<You know you can die, right?>

Hansoo nodded.

He was different from the other transcendents.

He had to plant the Skills of Annihilation in his body one-by-one.

Right from the beginning, that had been the aspect of his trait, the <Seven Stars>.

A trait which allowed one to absorb the experience and

knowledge of the creator of the skill, and even allow oneself to take it a step further.

It only looked like a normal evolution on the surface.

Though it was impossible to rise up a step by devouring some random skill, but devouring a skill of annihilation would allow him to evolve a skill to the next level.

Like how he had crossed a wall when he evolved his Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement two years ago.

The next skill to be evolved was already set.

Pandemic Blade.

Usually, this skill would evolve faster the more it was used to kill.

Like how the owner of the Pandemic Blade had done in the past.

The creator of this skill had melted an entire world, and from that incident, had trained the skill to its limits.

And it was the obvious path to take.

Though it would take longer, it was safer and more fun to do so.

But there was a way to shorten the time as well.

Like how the owner of the Nine Dragons Spear had done in the past.

<You really are insane. You know that this is how the owner of the Nine Dragons Spear got killed, right? Why are you in such a rush...you can just let the others die and climb up slowly.> But Hansoo chuckled.

“Only those who need to die should die. Where's the meaning in a world if everyone dies?”

The Pandemic Blade's soul mumbled.

<...Whatever. You're the one dying, not me. At least you stopped playing around like a clown.> Then— —rumble—

The spores of the Pandemic Blade started to overflow inside Hansoo's body.

The dark red aura that had been devouring his insides.

The quickest and most efficient way to raise the mastery level of Pandemic Blade.

[Forcefully make the number of spores go on a rampage and make your body get used to it]

Gather the spores that are used to melt enemies and use them to melt your own body.

Turn your own body into a container for the Pandemic Blade.

This was the fastest and most efficient method indeed.

If one discarded the dangers.

‘Insane.’

The owner of the seed sighed.

This guy had been doing this ever since his egg form.

Though the Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement had risen to another level, the Pandemic Blade continued to reproduce to melt his nerves and intestines.

Because of this, his muscles, bones, and tendons that had been enhanced by the Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement could not stand the pressure, and prevented them from working properly.

He had to use a part of his mana to forcefully protect those parts of his body.

He couldn't even use the Pandemic Blade as a weapon.

Since the spores were focused on burning up his body.

He'd even got injured by things that he could crush with a finger, like that Dark King or Zeus.

Someone who had fully mastered a skill and someone who'd

merely bulked up using crystals; the difference was like that of the heavens and earth, even within the 1st-star transcendents.

Though both were made of iron, a baton and a sharp sword were vastly different.

‘Though the mastery level of the Pandemic Blade did go up fast...’

He had done so up til now since there had been no real dangers, but now everything had changed.

Hansoo had poured most of his mana into the Pandemic Blade instead of the Demonic Dragon’s Reinforcement.

Then—

—roaaaarr!—

Hansoo’s mana jade released a torrential amount of mana.

Not to protect his body but to increase the number of spores.

Then—

—shhhhhhhh!—

The dark red aura started to run rampant inside his body.

The spores continued to reproduce, greedily devouring Hansoo’s mana, melting his body down and seeping out from inside him.

Dark red smoke seeped out from his seven orifices, and his skin was soon covered by a red, toxic substance.

—chiiiiiiiik!—

His entire body melted down as smoke rose up.

And caused the Demonic Dragon’s Reinforcement and Immortal Soul to retaliate furiously.

A battle of time.

Whether his body could withstand this and allow him to rise up to another level.

Or melt down under the pressure.

‘Ugh, why is he willing to go through all this...? He just needs to melt down about half the people in this world.’

Who cares if the others died? Hansoo just needed to ignore that Ark-Roa, climb up and slowly train.

And it would be even faster if he used the Pandemic Blade to train against those who would be dying anyway.

Why was the future ‘Demon King’ acting like this?

He was the owner of the being who had melted down an entire world to rise up as a transcendent, and he didn’t understand this situation.

‘Well... some already view this guy as a Demon King now.’

The soul then thought of Zeus, who should be running towards a specific location.

<Can you really just stick around here? What if all of them escape and go up?> The soul had heard Hansoo ordering Zeus to tell the others to gather if they didn’t want to die.

But couldn’t they just go up?

Hansoo, who was now fully covered in a dark-red shade, spoke with difficulty: “It...doesn’t...ma...tter...Somebody...else will...act instead...”

<...Who? Karhal? Ekidu? Those guys?>

Hansoo shook his head.

.....

—rummmmb—

— swooooosh—

‘Good, good. I’m almost there.’

Hermes, who had been ripping through space like a bolt of lightning, smiled as he neared the giant elevator.

That Zeus guy was pretty useless, but he did give him an important piece of information.

That the War Fortress was rebuilt and the adventurers were slowly gathering more Abyssal Crystals.

Which meant that he could just pick up the crystals on the way.

‘If there’s some pretty girls... seven will do.’

He would need at least that much if he was going up to a new world.

But as Hermes continued to fly with a smirk on his face— —he suddenly stopped after seeing a familiar back.

‘...What the? Did he notice it as well?’

The most silent one of them all.

Though he had no skills related to the underworld, he was called Hades because he acted like a grim reaper would.

And Hades was now standing on a hill, staring at the Elevator.

All while hiding his aura.

‘...I don’t feel good about this.’

It was always best to follow suit if he had no information about what was going on.

Hermes also hid his aura as he asked Hades.

“...What? Hades? Why are you standing here?”

Hades nodded in greeting and only pointed towards the elevator.

Towards a location near the giant elevator to be specific.

And Hermes’s expression turned stiff as he looked.

The one who’d made them.

The being who stood in the deepest corners of their hearts like a heavy stone.

That being had been slowly fading away from their memories because he had left without asking them for anything.

But for him to appear at this time.

And his objective seemed to be very clear.

Kuaaaaaa...

Their creator.

And the person who was being crushed under his feet.

Hermes clenched his fists as he looked at this scene.

.....

“Aahhhhh...”

The Dark King, who couldn't win over his fear of death and had tried to go up, had been caught and was now crying out loud.

And the man who had cut off the legs of the Dark King chuckled as he looked around at the elevator.

He didn't ask anything of them.

Since no owner would ask the pigs they raised for anything.

But it would be annoying if they went up.

Because then the thing he had released would have less food.

‘Let's see... One or two should have been eaten already. Kang Hansoo, where are you now?’

No one could go up.

The man who had released the Ark-Roa and had made the transcendents then laughed coldly next to the elevator.

Chapter 324 : Ark-Roa (3)

Crunch.

Crunch. Crunch.

As it finished devouring another person, the Ark-Roa's color and shape became more and more defined.

Limbs sprouted out, and its body shrunk down in size.

Though it was now smaller, it had become stronger overall and even its intelligence had risen.

And slowly, the memories of the humans it had eaten started to appear inside its head.

Well, it had the memories after consuming them actually.

It just didn't have the intelligence to decipher the meanings behind them up until now.

It had solely been focused on instinctively hunting and finding nutrition.

But not anymore.

There were about thirteen nutritious ones left.

Ten of which were comrades of the two it had eaten.

Two were enemies with the ten.

One was feared by all.

Kirrrrik.

Ark-Roa pondered with its newfound intellect.

It was not a match for the being that everyone feared.

But it wasn't hard to reach that level.

It would just need to eat about four more to get to the next stage.

Then everything would be over.

It could then devour the world.

Ark-Roa continued to think.

It was time to choose.

Either to eat the two who were separated from the others, and then head for the ten.

Or head towards the ten.

Of course, it didn't have to think very long.

Its hunger had continued to call out to it.

And it was even worse because it had absorbed the greed of the humans it had eaten.

Greed for power.

Greed to crush everything beneath its feet.

Though it wasn't within the memories of the humans it had eaten, it had a feeling that it needed to get stronger as soon as possible.

This newly enhanced greed and gluttony drove the Ark-Roa past the great tundra.

.....

'F***...F***. F***. What do I do?'

Hermes was at a loss.

He knew instinctively that the monster standing below the tower was a level above them.

But then—

A familiar voice could be heard behind him.

"You bastard, you just tried to run away, right?"

Hermes shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't fuss over it that much, you would've done the same

thing.”

“...Ugh.”

Zeus gave up.

They were all like this.

Since that man had deliberately picked people like this in the first place.

‘What a shitshow.’

One after another, their allies started to gather.

—SSSSS—

“What’s up? Why did you call us to meet up?”

“F***...Did you call us over to deal with him?”

‘One...Two.Three.’

Zeus frowned as he counted.

Other than Hades, Hermes, and himself, there should be nine left.

But only five had come.

“Where’s Demeter?”

Zeus asked in confusion.

He never knew what that b**** Athena was ever up to, and the other two were arrogant so it made sense that they wouldn’t come.

‘Athena is really hard to meet. I’ve seen her maybe...once? Twice?’

But this Hermes kid always followed Demeter around while wagging his tail.

For someone whose territories were so close to not come together...

Hermes inwardly jolted at the question.

‘Should I answer?’

But the answer came from someone else.

Kyle, also known as Hades, raised his hand.

“She was eaten.”

“What? Don’t joke around...What could even eat us?”

One of the girls who had arrived after Zeus scoffed, but Zeus cursed out since he knew the identity of the Ark-Roa.

“F***...it’s that fast already. Why did you just leave if you knew she was being eaten? Why didn’t you help?”

“...Apparently, you haven’t seen it yet.”

Hades replied with a heavy expression.

They wouldn’t really help each other if they were dying anyway.

Even if their own children were being eaten, they wouldn’t actually go and help them.

Hades really didn’t want to approach the creepy creature that devoured Demeter. Afterwards it had gone through some sort of metamorphosis, making strange noises all the while.

The other transcendents noticed the strange tension between Zeus and Hades, and grew uneasy as well.

“Hey, what’s up? What really happened?”

“Why did Demeter die?”

Everybody was making confused expressions.

And Hermes realized the gist of the situation.

‘That bastard... I know why he made us now.’

Hermes clenched his teeth.

He realized why that man had made them and left them alone to roam freely.

And why that man had reappeared the moment that black monster appeared.

Why that powerful man was now just guarding the exit to go up.
He realized it all.

‘We...we were raised as livestock...’

The only exit had been blocked and that horrifying monster now roamed this world.

Then—

A thought appeared in Hermes’s head.

“Hey Zeus, you said you got caught by someone, right?”

“...”

Zeus frowned.

Hermes ignored Zeus’s expression and continued to speak.

“You said that he has a bad relationship with that man over there right? It looks like that man was the one who released the monster that ate Demeter.”

Zeus nodded.

Hermes’s guesses were mostly on point.

“But...how did you know that Demeter died?”

Hermes cut Zeus off as he continued to speak.

“That’s not important. Anyway, that guy who caught you hasn’t run away yet since he’s confident, right?”

“Right.”

Hermes chuckled.

“Let’s go to him.”

“Huh?”

“What else can we do? Let’s go help him. That’s the only path we

can take at this point.”

Help the mysterious man who they had no information about.

But, then again, their choices were very, very limited.

At this rate they would only become food for that monster.

But seeing that the guy had called them over, it looked like he had something up his sleeve.

Which meant that right now, no matter what, they had to help that man who had captured Zeus.

Whether to stab him in the back or run away without fighting him, that would only matter if they survived from this fight.

There was nothing for them to gain from just loitering around here anyway.

Zeus frowned at Hermes's words.

‘...Dumbasses. You'll all probably be his slaves if you go to Hansoo...’

He hadn't gathered them here to listen to Hansoo's instructions.

But rather to ask for help.

To suppress Hansoo, and just leave him at the point of death.

Once they pressed him down with their weapons, they could just leave him with a breath of life remaining, and keep him in a safe place. And then he would be free.

But it looked like that wouldn't work anymore.

‘Damn...’

As Zeus frowned.

A voice rang out.

“Retards. You go do that. I'm betting my luck on something with higher chances.”

“Huh? What are you planning to do?”

Hermes frowned at the curvaceous woman who had stepped out.
The woman looked over her body, and then gulped.

“If he’s also a man...something will happen, one way or another.”

“Come on, Hera...”

“You f***er, call me by my name. Grow up, did I say I was going to be his wife?”

Hera—real name, Allison—cursed at Zeus.

No matter what angle they looked at it from, the man who had created them held the absolute advantage.

Shouldn’t they stick to the winning side? At least she was going to.

‘Yeah... If you’re also a man, then...’

She was useful, strong and beautiful.

Usually, she would pull out the eyes of anyone who had such thoughts towards her, but with their current situation, she had to utilize everything she had at her disposal.

Allison quickly headed towards the man standing below the tower.

.....

—rumble—

The Dark King violently trembled.

When this man had attacked, he felt as if the world had collapsed.

‘Was there this much difference...?’

If he knew the differences were this large than he wouldn’t have even tried to climb up.

The Dark King trembled in fear as he stared at the man stepping

on him.

“Ughhh...”

The man raised his eyebrows.

“Why does this dumbass just keep screaming...?”

The man put his hand on the Dark King’s back.

Then—

—swooooosh!—

The dark red aura started to get sucked out from the Dark King’s brain and his heart.

Into the hands of the man.

“Ahhh...haa...”

The Dark King even forgot the pain of his cut-off legs as he made a joyous expression.

Since the pain of his severed leg was nothing compared to what Hansoo had given him.

The man ignored the Dark King and focused solely on the dark red cloud in his hand, poking it with his finger.

—chiiiiik—

The dark red aura tried to savagely burn his finger, but it couldn’t withstand the aura surrounding the man’s body and it soon dispersed into the air.

And the man smirked.

‘...Was he only this strong?’

The man sighed in relief.

He had been uneasy the whole time he’d planned this.

He had vowed for revenge, but he didn’t know how strong Hansoo had become in the past two years.

This was why he had released the Ark-Roa, which even he was wary of.

He felt like his own strength wouldn't be enough.

But it looked like there was no need for him to release the Ark-Roa.

'Well, let's go beat up Hansoo first...'

But the man soon shook his head.

Since a girl had come to bother him.

Unlike the other twelve, including the Dark King.

The one who had escaped his watch as soon as she was made.

'If only everyone was this easy to read.'

"Hello?"

The man smiled coldly as he looked at the woman who was approaching him with a charming smile of her own.

.....

800 kilometers west of the War Fortress.

—rumble—

"Haa...Haa..."

Taesang was gasping for air after having run for so long.

'...F***. I don't know if I'm doing the right thing.'

He had been running like a crazed person to find that man's friends, who all apparently lived in the west.

But he was scared out of his wits because of that Ark-Roa thing that was roaming the lands.

'No, it shouldn't be interested in weaklings like me. He said it wasn't interested in ants...'

Though he was more of a dog than an ant.

Of course, that wasn't really reassuring.

The fact that he had some strength was the reason why he'd been entrusted with this job anyway.

Though he wasn't the main target of the Ark-Roa, he was able to pass through the tundra which the others would have a hard time crossing.

—boooooom!—

Kyaak!

Taesang continued to run after turning four Kang-Kions into powder.

Well, until something blocked his path.

—OOooong—

The space in front of him had split apart.

Then—

“Where are you going? I've never seen you before.”

“Ahh!”

—boom!—

Taesang freaked out, and slashed out with his sword at the silhouette of the woman. But his blades, which could chop apart abyssal monsters with ease, were caught by the woman's hands.

‘What the hell...!?’

—toong!—

Taesang cursed, and backed off.

“Hmm...”

The woman figured out where Taesang was heading off to, and then smiled as if she realized something.

“I don't think you'll need to go?”

“Huh?”

“It should be done by now.”

Chapter 325 : Ark-Roa (4)

“Ahhh...”

Hera—or Allison—was screaming, while being choked in mid-air.
And bleeding profusely.

‘This maniac!’

Allison grit her teeth at the man who was choking her, treating her like some random street dog.

Why was he being so cold when she had listened well, and was even willing to offer her body?

The man smiled coldly as he stared at Hera’s confused expression.

‘How dare you scum...’

Of course, using this girl would’ve been beneficial for him.

Since the others over there would also listen well.

But he himself might get mixed up as food for the Ark-Roa if he tangled with those kids.

And another thing.

He did not like these kids at all.

He actually wanted them to die in misery.

—boom!—

“Argh!”

The man threw Allison down on the ground, and even kicked the Dark King.

“Kuhuk!”

“Take this guy too, and do whatever you want with him.”

The man smiled as he saw the movements of the people standing

on the hill above.

‘Yes, run far, far away, and get devoured...’

.....

—tatatatatak!—

“F***... He’s just insane!”

Hermes cursed and ran away after seeing the man attack Allison immediately.

He was sure that madman had never planned to let the twelve of them live in the first place.

Which meant that there was no room for negotiation.

‘F***...do we really have to become that thing’s food?’

Hermes grit his teeth.

He could not allow that.

He believed that there was always a way.

‘I don’t know what the hell I can do with these retards though.’

Hermes glanced over at Ares who was chewing on his nails beside him.

“Ahhh...No way. Why? Why, when he has so much strength...”

The guy, who looked to be barely twenty, was almost going mad with worry.

Of course it made sense.

Since he was part of the lucky few.

He had been able to come up to the Green Zone without facing a single hurdle in just one year.

And the moment he got up to the zone, he had become a transcendent after being found by that guy.

To him, this current life was probably much more fun than his

old one back in the real world.

He was probably an A+ nerd who'd been ignored by everyone.

But after coming here, he had basically become a king.

He hadn't hesitated to abuse his power either.

Even Hermes was shocked at how good Ares was at killing and pouncing on women.

That was one of the reasons he had named him Ares as well.

'...We have no other options. We have to go to that man.'

That man probably had something up his sleeves since he was preparing to fight that monster.

'...I just don't have enough intel. Damn... I don't like having to get help from some unknown stranger.'

But as Hermes was about to speak to Zeus— —parrrrrrrrrk—

A bird flew towards them at a very fast speed.

To Ares.

'...Flier? A message? From who? Athena? Poseidon? Or is it Artemis?'

Very childish names they were, but they were easy to memorize.

'I hope it's Athena...'

Hermes mumbled, as he thought about the mysterious woman who always seemed to have been hiding something.

Ares shouted out in glee.

"We can live! Hahahaha! We'll live! Long live Poseidon! Hahaha!"

"Huh? What are you saying?"

Everybody made confused faces at Ares who was laughing like a madman, and he continued to scream: "It's done! Poseidon has almost killed that monster! With Artemis! Hahaha!"

“Huh?”

The faces of everybody changed.

The fire was put out.

According to Hades, that monster had the ability to find them like a hunting dog.

That was why they’d been afraid.

But that monster was now dead.

Though that man guarding the elevator was strong, he wouldn’t be able to find them.

Just how large was this continent?

They could just all split up and slowly get stronger.

‘Good! Good! Good!’

Ares smiled.

This was how it should’ve been.

No matter how strong the monster was, it shouldn’t have been able to threaten transcendents like themselves.

Humans were the king of the world, and only other transcendents were worthy opponents for them.

If a monster that strong already existed, why hadn’t they seen them around by now?

At this point, there should’ve been plenty of monsters who were weaker than that black shadow, but stronger than the Kang-Kions all over the continent.

But as Ares smiled—

—Hermes smiled back and said:

“Then... Our business is finished, right? Let’s split up then.”

“Huh? What?”

Then—

—boooooom!—

The space below Hermes exploded as his body disappeared in a flash.

Into the distance.

And Ares was at a loss.

‘Why is that fogey in such a rush?’

They could at least discuss their next plan of action, right?

It was really rare for so many of them to gather in one place.

But Ares suddenly realized something as he stared at the shape of Hermes disappearing into the distance.

‘Where is he...?’

The direction which the Flier had come from.

Which was the direction where Poseidon’s base was located.

Hermes was going in that exact direction.

Ares had forgotten about it for a moment.

That monster was also an abyssal creature.

An extremely strong one at that.

‘F***! That thing should have left a ton of crystals!’

He didn’t know how Poseidon and Artemis had almost killed it, but if that thing was as strong as he’d heard, those two should be half dead as well.

So if one of them could get there, and then finish them all off, then they could reap an endless amount of benefits.

Then—

“How cold. I’m going to go help Poseidon.”

“Me too, I’m quite close with Artemis.”

The transcendents started to leave one-by-one.

“Damn it!”

—boom!—

Ares started to charge towards Poseidon’s base as well.

‘If I can have that crystal... I’ll be able to beat that b****, Athena!’

The woman who’d made his heart beat.

Which was why he’d always been depressed about it.

Since she was stronger than him.

If she was weaker, he would’ve been able to dominate her.

This was the perfect chance.

For revenge.

He had been beaten halfway to death after trying it get it on with her in the past.

Ares threw away the message and disappeared into the horizon as well.

To chase after those who had gone first.

“Damn...what’s going on?”

Zeus was at a loss for words as he looked at his comrades charging off with greed-filled eyes.

Even the Dark King, whose feet had been cut off, was charging over.

‘I don’t feel good about this.’

With a worried expression, Zeus picked up the message Ares had thrown away.

It was clearly Poseidon’s handwriting.

But something felt amiss.

Zeus made a different decision as he headed towards Hansoo’s

location.

.....

—rumble—

A snow-covered tundra.

A giant hill which originally held a cave had melted down entirely.

—bubble bubble—

And from the middle of the melted-down land— —a man stood up.

‘Good.’

Hansoo moved his hands around as he checked the status of his body.

The attempt was a success.

The spores of the Pandemic Blade were no longer a threat to him.

No, they were now a powerful part of his strength.

—sssssk—

Hansoo mumbled to himself as he looked at the red cloud floating around his body.

‘Should I have done this from the beginning...?’

Hansoo felt the tremendous amount of strength inside him.

With this, he would be able to do a lot more.

But he soon shook his head.

—bubble bubble—

Everything within a few-hundred-meters radius had entirely melted down.

He hadn’t been able to fully suppress the toxins of the Pandemic Blade during the process.

If he had done it with ease, this wouldn't have happened in the first place.

Which meant that it was a very close call.

He had only succeeded because his body had gotten used to it; if he had tried this from the very beginning then it wouldn't have stopped at just melting him.

—bubble bubble bubble—

Hansoo stood up from the bubbling land and looked towards the distance.

‘Let's head on over.’

Then—

“Yo! Did you succeed?!”

A familiar voice was heard.

Zeus's voice.

Hansoo jumped up, landed by Zeus and spoke to him.

“What a disappointment. I told you to bring everyone else, but you only brought one?”

Zeus was at a loss.

He brought someone?

—sss—

Somebody appeared out of thin air.

“Ugh... Amazing. This is one of my hidden cards.”

“Huh?”

Zeus was shocked to see the man who had followed him.

He was someone who should not be here.

“What the...Hermes? Why are you here?”

Hermes touched the goosebumps on his arms as he spoke.

“I didn’t feel right about it.”

‘So I lured them away.’

There were plenty of brains within the group.

.....

“Hahaha! Poseidon! Where are you?!”

‘After I get the crystal, I’ll find that b**** Athena first, and... see how she screams.’

Ares looked around once he arrived.

Indeed, a battle had occurred here.

—rumble—

Poseidon’s former lake-side city had been half destroyed.

All the people seemed to have already run away, but they weren’t within his interests anyway.

‘Anyways, those fogeys are real slow.’

Ares laughed as he thought of the others who would be running over.

If you left out Hermes, his own speed was the fastest of them all.

‘Anyway, Hermes should’ve arrived first. Where is he?’

As Ares looked around with a hurried expression.

He saw someone on the ground in the distance.

And he rushed over the moment he realized who it was.

‘...Poseidon? Did he get killed?’

That colorful outfit was hard to miss.

Ares flew over and shook Poseidon.

“Hey! What happened! You said you almost won! Where did that monster go!?”

He didn’t care about Poseidon’s health, but if that monster was

still alive and kicking, it would be a huge issue.

Then—

A strange voice came out from Poseidon.

“Right...here.”

“Huh?”

While Ares was feeling shocked by the strange voice— —crunch

—Poseidon’s body started to twist and turn in a weird angle.

“Ahhh!”

Ares freaked out and tried to push Poseidon away, but it was too late.

A dark mouth charged out from Poseidon’s shoulder and chomped down on Ares’s hand.

—kwaduk—

“UAHH!”

A happy voice came out from Poseidon’s mouth.

“If...eat...you. Two more.”

It even knew their names.

Demeter, Artemis, Poseidon, Ares.

Two more.

After two more, it would be able to evolve.

—crunch—

Poseidon’s mouth split apart as he swallowed Ares whole.

—crunch crunch—

The Ark-Roa’s shape started to change again.

To look like Ares which it had just eaten.

Then—

A strange voice came out from his mouth.

“He...hey! F...found it! Found it! Guys, I found it!”

It started off weird, but soon it was able to perfectly copy Ares’s voice.

It then started to laugh coldly at the thought of the others who should be rushing over at any moment now.

Chapter 326 : Ark-Roa (5)

“What?”

Hermes was wary of Hansoo but nevertheless, he shrugged his shoulders and spoke: “No matter how you think about it, it’s suspicious. Don’t you know how selfish they are? Why would they send a message when it’s almost been killed?”

Anyone would have figured it out after some short thought.

That those guys weren’t that kind-hearted.

Which meant that this was a trap.

But who would buy them time if everyone knew it was a trap?

If that thing had made a trap, then that meant a trap was needed.

A trap being needed also meant that somebody needed to fall into the trap.

So he had indeed lured them away.

To rouse their innate greed and competitiveness.

‘Retards. That’s what you get when strength is handed over to you.’

Hermes clicked his tongue.

The only ones with the right to possess strength were those who’d gone through countless struggles, and could make the correct decision in any situation.

Like Ekidu or Karhal.

But weak people who run away from danger were bound to act stupidly after they gained strength.

“f***...”

“What, is there an issue?”

Hermes was confused at Zeus who was looking at him in anger.

It didn't matter right?

Those guys weren't pushovers.

It would be for the better if they weakened the monster's strength as they fought.

Zeus remembered a fact he had forgotten to mention.

'Dumbass... That thing gets stronger the more it eats...'

Of course he wouldn't have been able to imagine it if Hansoo hadn't told him either.

For something to eat and absorb the skills, intellect and memories of the things it had eaten.

This dumbass just handed over 7 huge chunks of meat.

Hansoo chuckled from behind and whispered.

"How about it? Now you understand why I wanted to put leashes on you guys right?"

"...?"

Hermes's expression froze.

Didn't Zeus said he wanted them to gather for a cooperation?

What was a leash about?

Then.

Boom!

The space below Hermes exploded as his body disappeared.

His skill, <God of the Skies>, sent him hundreds of meters away in an instant.

'I was fooled!'

Hermes grinded his teeth.

He was laughing at those who had fallen into that monster's trap but it seems he has also fallen into a trap.

By walking into it as well.

‘What a dumb move on my part...’

Hermes ran away on his maximum speed.

Chills continued to run down his back.

The expression of the worried Zeus and the screaming Dark King at the elevator flashed by his eyes.

‘Still...It won’t be easy to catch me.’

Hermes signed out in relief as he ran away.

He could feel the presence of that guy getting further behind him.

He had been able to even run away from that monster.

In terms of speed, he was the fastest out of the twelve.

Zeus grinded his teeth as he looked at Hermes running away at an explosive speed.

“Are you gonig to let him go?”

Hansoo chuckled at Zeus’s words.

“No.”

Then.

Crunch.

Crack.

Strange changes started to happen on Hansoo’s body.

The dragonic energy, which hadn’t been able to shine properly because of the Pandemic Blade, started to spread all over his body.

His muscles bulged.

It wasn’t three like when he went through the Racial Metamorphosis, but his now even more powerful two hearts were pumping blood throughout his body at a crazy rate.

The Mana Jade, which had now completely integrated with his body, was pouring out mana like a storm.

And changes weren't only occurring on the insides.

Chiiiiik.

An extremely thin layer of transparent scales appeared and covered his skin.

Then.

Tdddddck.

‘WHAT THE HELL!!’

Zeus's jaws dropped as he looked at Hansoo's change.

How was it possible?

For horns to grow from the head of a human.

But it had really happened, in front of his eyes.

Tddk.

Two horns were growing out from Hansoo's head.

They weren't large but those two horns clearly indicated his difference from humans.

Then.

Boooom!

A tremendous flood of aura exploded out from his body.

Energy created from mixing the dark gold energy of the Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement and his newly evolved red Pandemic blade.

And Zeus slowly backed up as he saw this.

With the melted down land as the background.

A man with two horns was standing while releasing a horrifying aura.

‘f***... We were all just playing house compared to this guy...’

As Zeus, or Miguel, tried his best to suppress the fear rising from his mind.

Hansoo looked towards the direction Hermes had disappeared to.

Though their strength was useful, they were using it in the wrong methods.

And Eres wanted him to kill them all.

But that was such a waste, was it not?

If he can just perform <Enlightenment> on them, they would become very useful.

“Hahahaha! Farewell!”

Hansoo smiled as he heard the voice of Hermes echoing out from the distance.

‘Yeah. My actual job is to put dog leashes on you and whip you around.’

Hansoo tightly grasped the Forked Lightning in his hand.

Then.

Boooooom!

The golden spear in Hansoo’s hand.

Split through space and disappeared into the horizon.

Towards Hermes who was smiling as if he had successfully ran away.

.....

Crunch.

Crunch crunch.

Hephaestus freaked out as he saw the monster devouring Hera while having the form of Ares.

‘...f***!’

Hera’s look mixed in with the look of Ares it was transformed.

Something continued to bubble up above as it continued to transform back from woman to man.

Demeter, Artemis and Poseidon’s faces all appeared and disappeared one by one.

Hephaestus turned and started to run away at this horrendous sight.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

He had originally been proud of his large body but now, he was deeply hating it.

The thing had stopped imitating others now.

The dark humanoid creature stared at the running Hephaestus for a moment.

Then.

Boom! Boom!

It started to charge over.

With a huge desire to devour him.

It just needed one more.

It didn’t even need the others running behind him.

If it could eat this one, it would evolve into a whole another creature.

It could then figure out the identity of the annoying aura that had been continuously pestering it and pull it out of its roots.

Kyaaaaak!

The black Ark-Roa’s hand extended out as it chased after the running Hephaestus.

“Ahhh! You bastards! Wait for me!”

“Haa...! Haaa!”

The Dark king ignored the desperate screams of Hephaetus as he madly clawed away with his arms.

It was slower than running but this was what was allowing him to live.

He had naturally fallen behind because he had been slow and that had helped him to be the furthest away from the monster.

‘F***...F***! Wasn’t it the end after becoming a transcendent?’

Crunch Crunch!

Other transcendents caught up to the Dark King who had been running away while cursing.

Only four of them had been left other than Hephaestus in the distance.

Dionysus, Apollon and Hades.

But they seemed to be quite calm as they were running.

And the Dark King was at a loss.

‘Retards, do you think surviving here is the end?’

Of course he himself would be caught before them.

He was weaker and he didn’t have his legs either.

But what about after him?

There was nowhere to run from this hell.

And as if Apollon had read his mind, he kicked the Dark King while frowning.

Boom!

“Kuaaaak!”

It wasn’t just a normal kick.

His arm burnt up as the kick had been imbued with flames.

Tatatata!

The Dark King couldn't withstand the pain as he rolled on the ground as Apollon laughed.

“Hahaha! You should just become food since your legs are cut off anyway! I didn't injure you that much so good luck!”

“You f***ing bastard!”

That guy hadn't let him off easy for him.

It was only because the less injured he was, the longer he would be able to fight.

And into the ears of the Dark King.

The desperate calls of Hephaestus could be heard.

“Ahhh! f*** off!”

Boom!

Kyaaa!

The Dark King fell into despair as it looked at the mysterious dark creature who had caught up to Hephaestus.

.....

Rumble!

Dionysus asked with a worried expression after running for a bit longer.

“Hey! What are you going to do?”

They would be able to escape for now but an answer not existing was still the case.

But Hades replied instead.

“Athena. Find her. She might have some methods up her sleeve.”

“...Against that thing? Even if she does, do you even know where she is?”

And Dionysus was shocked as he saw Hades nodding his head.

Athena had always been very mysterious and lonesome.

Boom! Boom!

Apollon shouted at Dionysus.

“Is that really what’s important!? Let’s just agree to not backstab each other first... Even if the others die, we have to survive and go up. Okay?”

He could not die.

The world was such an amazing place, how could he die like this?

Then.

Sssss.

“Of course. You won’t be able to backstab anymore. I don’t know about surviving and going up though.”

“What...!?”

Apollon freaked out as a man appeared out of thin air in front of him.

Where did he come from?

But even before he could complete this thought.

Hansoo’s right hand swung at him and smashed onto his stomach.

Boom!

“Kuaaaak!”

“It was a light punch, don’t overreact.”

Dionysus trembled in fear at the man who had appeared out of thin air and had attacked Apollon.

‘Light?’

One attack.

One attack was enough to cause Apoolon to scream out and fall onto the ground with a huge indent on his stomach.

This was light?

‘...Where did this f***er pop out from?’

He wanted to run but his feet didn’t listen to him.

Since he felt like he would get killed the moment he tried.

Hansoo spoke as he looked at the one rolling around the ground and the two frozen in place.

“Yeah, I’ll have to recycle for now. If your friendship hasn’t changed... Then you guys would’ve been a bit happier.”

Hansoo chuckled as he sensed the exploding aura of the monster.

If these guys worked together to fight and didn’t abandon their comrades then they would’ve bought enough time until he got here.

And he would’ve been able to easily suppress the Ark-Roa.

But it seems the Ark-Roa has been able to pick them out one by one and successfully evolve.

Whatever.

Fighting that thing was part of these guys’s destiny as well.

“F***ing...Hell.”

As Apollon spoke out in despair.

Rumble.

A dark red aura started to seep out around Hansoo.

Chapter 327 : Ark-Roa (6)

Roaarr!

“Ahhh!”

‘F***!’

After seeing Hades rolling on the floor in pain, Dionysus immediately activated his movement skill to run away.

—boom!—

Skill, Fog of the Night.

A skill that covered the surroundings in a thick fog, creating a swamp of clouds.

A normal person would melt just by entering the fog itself, but of course, Dionysus didn’t even want such a thing to happen.

‘Run while this distracts him!’

“Traitor!”

He heard the shouts of Hades, but Dionysus ignored it.

They could not win.

The moment he saw the man with horns, he knew.

But if he could get away, he might be safe.

Since that monster over there wouldn’t let such a large meal go.

He could run away while the monsters fought amongst themselves.

‘Farewell, you bastards...’

Then—

—swoosh!—

A hand reached out from the fog and grabbed him.

“Huh?”

‘How? He should still be behind me!’

Dionysus freaked out at first, but soon brightened up after seeing who it was that grabbed him.

“Hermes! Where did you—”

But Hermes, who had a giant hole on one of his shoulders, made a bitter expression as he cut Dionysus’s words off.

“I’m sorry.”

“Huh...?”

—boooooom!—

A giant bolt of lightning pierced through the fog and smashed into Dionysus.

—crackle!—

“Ahhh...!”

‘No...’

Dionysus realized who the owner of that bolt of lightning was, and started panicking.

And Hermes mumbled while holding onto his wrist— “Let’s go together.”

—boom!—

After reinforcing his leg with his skill, Hermes lifted his leg up and smashed Dionysus in the stomach.

“Ugh...”

‘Bastard...why?’

Dionysus’s skills dispersed, and the fog followed suit.

And Dionysus fell into despair as he stared at the man walking towards him, who was dragging Hades and Apollon along with him.

.....

—rumble—

“Ugh...damn it! Why are we being imprisoned? What can we do against a monster like that?!”

Apollon glared at Hansoo, gritting his teeth.

Red smoke was constantly entering his, Dionysus's and Hades's bodies.

And he knew the moment his smoke entered his body— —that they were now slaves.

Hermes and Zeus, who were following behind them with a blank expression, proved it all.

The red smoke entered his body and settled around his muscles, nerves, and spine.

—zzzst—

He felt chills and cold sweat running down his back.

A feeling of some thing grabbing hold of his spine that was wondering whether to twist it apart or not.

“Kuaaaak!”

But Hansoo didn't care about all this.

“Be quiet for a bit.”

He couldn't change the fact that the Arc Roa had already evolved.

But this wasn't the only variable.

There was a bigger one in fact.

The one who wanted revenge against him.

‘I could win but... if I did, I'd just get stabbed behind my back.’

Hansoo mumbled.

There was a very high chance that this being had a method to hide from the Arc-Roa.

That person would aim for an opening while he fought with the Arc-Roa.

Even Hansoo wouldn't be able to defeat both at the same time.

Which meant that he would need to utilize the guys he'd caught as much as he could.

‘...There's probably something you guys can do as well.’

—rumble—

Hansoo chuckled as he looked at the five who had red smoke entering their bodies.

.....

—rumble—

After devouring the creature that had named itself Hephaestus, it had evolved into another level.

After receiving sufficient energy from its food, this released the genes that had been locked inside its body and caused it to transform in an explosive manner.

The shadow-like body of the Ark-Roa thrashed about as if it were about to explode.

But only for a moment.

—crack—

—snap—

The shadow-like form fused into itself as it turned into a humanoid.

The Ark-Roa, which had turned into a two-meter tall black humanoid, looked at its newly-evolved body.

“Ah. Ahhh. Ahh. Go...good. It's good.”

The voice was raspy at first, but soon it cleared up into an actual human's voice.

And then the skin of the Ark-Roa bubbled as it formed a set of armor on its body.

A set of armor similar to those worn by the things it had eaten.

Though it looked more and more human after donning on armor, the Dark King's instincts constantly screamed at him.

He could feel a monster that was on a whole other level from inside that thing's human-like skin.

The bloodthirsty aura currently blasting at him made his skin feel like it was being ripped apart—that proved it all.

“Uahh...AHhhhh!”

The Dark King freaked out from this aura, and he struggled to run away.

And after a while, he'd managed to go all the way up to the fortress which he had ruled in the past.

Of course there wasn't anything that could protect him here, but there was nothing else in the Dark King's mind.

Only the thought of hiding from that monster.

“...”

Ark-Roa looked at the Dark King struggling to run away, and smiled.

There was too much to eat.

It had to get stronger, faster.

Then—

—stomp!—

The Ark-Roa smashed its feet onto the ground.

Kyakakakayak!

“Uaa..Uaaahah!”

Metal spikes rose up from the ground and smashed through the

Dark King's remaining leg.

A skill once used by Demeter, who it had devoured.

But as the Ark-Roa approached to feast on the Dark King while listening to its scream— —boom!—

—a huge sound echoed out as the spikes that pierced through the Dark King were smashed apart.

And the Dark King was at a loss for words after seeing who had saved him.

“Why...”

Zeus grit his teeth as he looked at the Dark King.

He had become like this after becoming interested and getting involved with the Dark King.

He wanted to rip the Dark King apart, but he could not.

Since any form of help would be useful at this moment.

“Shut up, you bastard. You come help as well. I'll kill you if you become annoying.”

‘F***. F***. F***.’

Zeus looked at the monster that was staring at the five of them—all of whom had become Hansoo's slaves—and thought of Hansoo's words.

<You'll be the bait. Attract its attention as much as you can. Once an opening appears, I'll attack it right away.> It was a good plan, but there was a fatal flaw.

Their own lives were at risk.

So the five of them had asked:

Then, what of them?

But the reply that had come was too simple.

<That's why I'm telling you to do your best. The better you do...

the more openings will occur. Once I attack, then you'll be able to live.> 'Damn it. Damn it...'

Zeus grit his teeth, started up his skills and sent them towards the monster.

"Die!"

—boooooom!—

Then—

The five of them, and the Dark King as well, started to unleash their attacks on the Ark-Roa.

—boom!—

—swoosh!—

—crackle!—

Every attack was more than strong enough to smash apart hundreds of normal adventurers.

But none of the six had on pleasant expressions, but rather, they wore the exact opposite.

While this was all happening, the Ark-Roa just chuckled as it looked at the six with amusement.

"Kahah."

And the moment the six of them heard this laugh, all of them fell into despair.

It was clear what that laugh meant.

It was looking down on them.

Then—

—boom!—

The Ark-Roa's body disappeared.

—crunch—

“Uaaaaak!”

Apollon screamed.

Something appeared right before his eyes and chomped on his arm.

“F***...you bastard!”

—boooooom!—

Flames rose up aggressively from Apollon’s body.

A powerful force which had been traded with the crystals he’d had gained from sacrificing the lives of thousands of humans.

But sadly, it had no effect on the Arc-Roa.

—chomp chomp—

“Kuuuhh...KUAHHH!”

Apollon screamed once more.

It wasn’t that his skills weren’t working.

Since the obsidian-like skin was slowly melting away from the flame, lightning, and poison.

But as the Arc-Roa continued to feast, its skin regenerated the moment it melted.

“Damn it!”

—crunch!—

Everybody roared as they continued to pour out their skills.

‘Daaammittt! I. Will. Not. Die. Here!’

“You bastard! Attack already!”

Zeus, who had been throwing out bolts of lightning one after another, roared at Hansoo with rage.

It was clear that they wouldn’t be able to win.

Him.

They needed him to attack to survive.

And...the moment he attacked the monster.

They would all attack Kang Hansoo and kill him.

‘Bastard... I’m going to kill you!’

Zeus burned in rage as he thought of the man who had shoved him into this hellhole.

No matter how strong the toxins inside their body, it wouldn’t be under anyone’s control after Hansoo died, and at that point they could just slowly release it from within their bodies.

Right now, the one he hated the most was Hansoo and not that monster.

And the moment Hansoo attacked the monster would be the moment he’d be buried in his grave.

Since their attacks would be landing on Hansoo’s back.

‘Come...attack!’

“BASTARRRD!”

—boomboomboomboomboom!—

The transcendents continued to throw out their skills at the Arc-Roa, which had just finished eating Apollon and was now looking towards them with greedy eyes.

.....

—crack—

—crunch—

“Hahahaha! I won! I...won!”

Zeus was in glee as he looked at Hansoo and the monster that had fallen at his feet.

His plan had succeeded.

The monster had been split in half from Hansoo’s attack.

And after they attacked Hansoo from behind, they'd managed to blow out his heart.

Both of them.

'What a monster... two hearts? He even has horns... He's definitely not a human.'

Well anyway, he had won.

And as for the ginormous crystal the beast had left behind— Once he devoured that, he'd be able to become stronger than even Kang Hansoo himself.

Plus there were all these items that Hansoo had left behind.

'Dumbass. Using us as your slaves? You really thought we were going to be that easy?'

—smack!—

Zeus smiled in glee after kicking away Hansoo's corpse.

He was now the king of his region.

He would enslave every female that came up.

Every male would be food for the abyssal crystals.

He would chase down the man who had created him, and kill him.

He'd enslave Athena who had yet to appear, and he would kill Karhal and Ekidu in the most painful way possible.

'No, I'll leave Ekidu alive. So she can become friends with Athena... hehehe.'

Then—

A voice appeared out of the air.

"What are you thinking about?"

Zeus was shocked, and looked at the female who had spoken to him with puzzlement.

“Huh? Aphrodite? How are you...”

Aphrodite smiled at Zeus’s words.

“What do you mean? I have to eat you.”

“Wha...”

Then—

—crunch—

“Kuggghuk...”

Zeus groaned out loud as he felt the tremendous amount of pain coming from his heart.

—crack!—

Cracks appeared in the air as reality started to break down.

Well, more like the illusion.

‘Aphrodite’s...skill. F*...**.’

Zeus fell into despair.

Illusory Dreams.

A skill which showed a scene the opponent desired the most, turning them defenseless.

Pain had made him break through the illusion as he started to see the true reality.

Kang Hansoo had not arrived, even after all six of them had been devoured.

The only ones left were him and the monster currently eating his heart.

‘...Lying bastard.’

Then—

—crunch!—

Arc-Roa gulped down Zeus’s head in one go as it finished up its

feast.

“Heh.”

As the Arc-Roa made a satisfied expression while it felt the powers from the six— —a storm was occurring inside it.

—rumble!—

The spores that had been sent into the bodies of the six became agitated, and fused inside the Arc-Roa’s stomach.

“Kuaa...AHHHHH!”

The Arc-Roa abruptly grasped onto its stomach and screamed.

.....

UAAAAHAHHHHH!

‘Nice and clean.’

Though it wouldn’t be easy to kill it off with the Pandemic Blade, it would be more than enough to buy him time.

Hansoo heard the scream echoing out from the distance as he looked at the man in front of him and spoke.

“While that thing is rolling around, let’s finish our business. Why do you hate me so much?”

“...”

The man who had been standing near the elevator stared at Hansoo, seething with rage.

Chapter 328 : The Grand Scheme (1)

Hansoo confirmed who the man was and frowned.

‘...He’s young.’

He didn’t even look twenty.

As Hansoo frowned at this young boy, who should’ve only been at high school or even younger— —rumble—

—the boy, Kael, frowned.

Where had it gone wrong?

Hansoo should not have been able to reach him.

The spell from the Rangkom’s Stake should’ve hidden him from the Ark-Roa.

The Ark-Roa should’ve eaten the transcendents in quick succession, and then become stronger from the easiest to the hardest targets.

And then finally it would reach Hansoo.

Then he himself would attack them both when they were half-dead from fighting each other.

This was his plan.

But instead, Hansoo had used the team he’d been raising for the Ark-Roa against him.

‘This guy is dangerous. This was why he’d been able to lead Sir Jang Oh to his death.’

Kael tightened his grip on the Rangkom’s Stake.

Whatever. This is good, too.

Since he should use his own hands to deal with his own issues.

<...I’ll leave the rest to you.>

Kael thought of Jang Oh’s last wish as he started to gather up

strength.

—rumble—

An abnormal world.

And its insane rules.

Outer appearances did not prove the true power of a being.

And as if Kael was trying to prove this, a storm of energy started to rush out from his body.

Hansoo frowned at this.

‘2 star indeed.’

This kid had climbed over the wall too.

And he was different from the ones who’d used the <Nursery> to grow stronger.

—boom!—

After completely gathering up his strength, Kael swung the stake at Hansoo.

The white stake, surrounded by a golden aura, aimed for Hansoo’s heart.

And the moment Forked Lightning and the stake collided— — boooom!—

—a tremendous explosion occurred as it swept through the surroundings.

—crackle!—

And Hansoo laughed as he sensed the tremendous amount of lightning crackling around his body.

‘He gathered a lot of energy into the stake, huh? And this is the Golden Demon’s Reinforcement.’

Golden Demon’s Reinforcement.

Skill rank 19.

The body, after being shrouded by golden light, boasted an ironclad defense and a very solid attack to match.

—boom!—

—boom!—

The golden spear and the white stake clashed, causing countless shockwaves to ring out.

The ground split apart and lightning fell.

Though it was only a clash between two people, the surrounding few hundred meters collapsed and the geography changed.

—sssss!—

The red spores seeped out from Hansoo's body and multiplied inside the boy's body to melt him down, right as the golden aura charged at Hansoo to smash apart his body.

—crunch!—

“Uaaahhh!”

As Forked Lightning was about to pierce through Kael's defenses and go through his heart— —Kael ignored the spear as he was also aiming for Hansoo's heart with the stake.

—booom!—

Hansoo quickly retreated to defend the attack, frowning as he looked at the insane boy.

That clash had been completely planned.

The boy had purposely let down his guard around his heart, and then waited for an opening.

All just to kill Hansoo, even if it meant risking his own life.

‘...I've never even seen this kid before, why does he hate me so much?’

The boy was too insane for this to be just simple rage.

A resolution to kill him even if it meant losing everything.

Then—

—Booom!—

Kael, who had been smashing at Hansoo with his golden aura, roared out in rage.

“If you hadn’t pushed Jang Oh that far! If you hadn’t brought the Abyss!”

Kael thought back to two years in the past.

Jang Oh had become a mess after his fight with Hansoo.

He had lost the fight and because he had overdrawn his soul, Taehee had been forced to act out personally, which had caused even more of a backlash.

But Jang Oh had tried to save his villagers despite his condition.

And he would have succeeded.

If the Obelisk hadn’t broken apart, which had caused a new, harsh environment to cover the entire Green Zone.

If the elevator hadn’t fallen into their world, which had brought down countless beasts with it.

<Everyone work hard! We must go up!> Jang Oh and everyone else had tried their best, but it hadn’t been enough.

The damage on Jang Oh’s body had become worse after he’d overexerted himself trying to go up.

And Kael had asked.

As to why they had to try so hard to go up.

Because the ones led by Kang Hansoo were defending the line from a distance.

Though they were slightly damaged from the beasts, they were hunting in relative safety.

But Jang Oh shook his head with a bitter expression.

<No, we are the losers. We are not like them.> Their situations were different.

If they remained... they'd be wiped out.

Because of the winners, they had to go up.

They had to go up and find a new way to survive.

'Damn it.'

Kael grit his teeth as he thought of the past.

Jang Oh had died.

Fighting while the villagers went up.

He and the villagers could only shed blood and tears, unable to help.

Under Jang Oh's protection, they had been able to safely gather runes and raise their respective mastery of skills.

But there was a limit to this.

A plant raised in a greenhouse will snap once it meets a storm.

And only when Jang Oh had fallen did they realize that the only ones who could rise up within the storm and face it head on were those who had gained their strength within the storm.

'F***ing... bastard! It's all because of you!'

—boooooom!—

Kael grit his teeth as he pushed Hansoo back more and more.

He had constantly been raising his strength for the day he would meet Hansoo.

He wasn't dumb.

He realized that the strength gained through training—and not through something like the nursery—was the only true way of becoming really powerful.

He'd realized that fighting in real life-threatening battles was the true way of becoming powerful, so he'd roamed through the entire 4th area to hunt the beasts and absorb their strength.

This was why there were no powerful beasts within the entire 4th area.

Because he had devoured them all.

He had almost died a few times, but he'd been able to reach the 2nd star.

And he had constantly gathered energy into the Rangkom's stake just in case.

And finally—

—he had met Hansoo.

The man who had turned Jang Oh into a mess and smashed apart the stage they'd been standing on.

The man whom he'd thought he could easily kill with this painstakingly-gained strength.

'Why... why?!'

—boooom!—

Kael grit his teeth as he stared at Hansoo.

The reality was harsh.

His strength was not fake.

He had confirmed it after smashing everyone apart, including the transcendents.

He hadn't slacked off even after reaching the 2nd star, so he had been confident that he could beat Hansoo, even if Hansoo had become a 2 star.

But what was this?

What of the two years he'd spent training like a maniac?

Then—

—swoosh!—

The golden spear flashed past the stake and smashed into his shoulder.

An attack much more fierce than his own.

“Ahhh!”

Kael screamed.

And the memories he had been suppressing slowly rose up.

Memories that had been locked away in case they might have been detrimental to his training.

<He...he is not normal. I've lost. It's not a matter of strength, but instead...he's just better at fighting.> He'd thought of the conversation he had with Jang Oh before his death.

He had beaten Jang Oh who had trained for over twenty years.

For someone who had only been in this zone for a year to become that strong, what would his life have been like?

And then he slowly thought back to the achievements this Hansoo guy had done in the past.

Achievements that he himself would fail even if he had ten lives.

‘...I see.’

Kael fell into despair.

He had been ignoring it until now.

No matter how hard he ran.

There was always someone who was soaring through the skies above him.

That just by simply trying his best didn't mean he could beat everyone.

—crunch!—

As his resolution crumbled, more and more openings appeared.

And his opponent was not somebody who would miss such a thing.

Kael smiled as he felt Hansoo smash his body with his spear, breaking through his reinforcement.

He wasn't enough.

But.

If he, the runner, was not enough.

He could just ask.

That person who was also soaring through the skies.

Kael closed his eyes and thought of the last conversation he'd had with Jang Oh.

<You...you are now the owner of this soul fragment. Don't cry. You will do well, you're a strong kid, believe in yourself.> 'Oh Mr. Jang Oh, this is the end for me. I have lost already. And... please help me. Clementine.'

The person who he'd idolized more than Jang Oh.

The moment he called out to the person who would be soaring through the skies far above them.

<You've done well... This is what Clementine told me to tell you. Good job. I'll take over from this point on.> The voice of the fragment's owner, Taehee, could be heard inside his mind.

And soon—

—kwaaaaaadddududuk—

The soul fragment that had been hiding in the corners of his mind started to devour him up from inside.

.....

Above a mountain a bit to the west of the War Fortress.

—kiiiiing!—

A blue semi-shaped sphere, four meters in size, had been casted around four people, all of whom sat in the middle.

Two males and two females.

And one of the males, Taesang, looked at the couple in amusement.

‘...So these are Karhal and Ekidu, huh?’

A couple from the legendary era of the past.

The people that man had been searching so hard for.

But he could not figure out the identity of the other person.

This woman who stared into the distance, holding onto a flail which reached down to her feet.

As Taesang looked in confusion at this lady who had basically abducted him into this place.

The lady raised her eyebrows and mumbled:

“Huh? This isn’t good.”

“He was crazier than I thought...”

Ekidu, Karhal, and Taesang finally asked her the question they had been trying to figure out for so long.

“Who are you?”

The mysterious woman who had saved them.

Without the woman, they would’ve been swallowed alive.

Since they had seen how the monster had come searching for them while it hid its aura, and then moving away after failing to find them.

‘...How does she know how to use that anyway?’

The flail in the woman’s hands.

The woman had been using the energy of the mana node with proficiency, which was why they'd been able to watch over the situation from relative safety.

This barrier seemed to disrupt that monster's senses.

Of course, they still couldn't approach the monster.

The woman pondered for a moment and then spoke.

"Hmm...just call me Athena for now. I'll tell you later."

It was childish.

But she really liked that name.

"...You're the last of the twelve? But why are you helping us?"

Athena smiled at the suspicion in Karhal's words.

"Because it is now time to move."

Athena muttered as she looked towards the War Fortress in the distance.

Chapter 329 : The Grand Scheme (2)

—rummmblee—

“It’s been two years. We didn’t get a chance to finish our conversation back then, right?”

Hansoo raised his brows at the boy’s sudden change in attitude.

And it wasn’t just his attitude alone.

His posture, aura, and his eyes had all changed.

Those eyes which he had previously seen on Jang Oh.

Hansoo mumbled as he stared into those eyes.

‘This boy inherited the soul fragment, huh?’

But even before Hansoo could finish his thoughts.

Taehee, who was now in full control of the boy, smiled.

“Well, the situation is much more different now.’

Then—

—boooooom!—

The moment the stake swept through the air, the Seven Strands Spear which Hansoo had experienced in the past shot out instantly.

—boom!—

Though it was sent out in haste, the power behind it was not weak.

The Seven Strands Spear charged towards him as it ripped the space apart.

A power which could even cause the Dark King to become a pile of meat in an instant.

‘As I suspected.’

There were no openings.

Unlike the Dark King, who was basically playing around with random skills, or the boy, who had still been experienced, this person was dimensions apart.

A skill that had been polished, over and over again.

Hansoo smiled coldly as he looked at the seven-colored spear which had manifested for the sole sake of destruction.

He had been hurt by this quite a lot in the past, but— —now he had something very useful up his sleeves to counter it.

Kirrrrrrik!

He pumped out a few dragons from his heart, and they ran towards the tip of his spear.

His heart continued to pump as it supplied every nook of his body with warm blood.

He poured out waves of his mana, causing the mana jade to go into overdrive.

And in the brief moment it took the Seven Strands Spear to reach Hansoo, four dragons had crawled up the spear and had condensed into a single point.

Then—

The dark orb flew out.

—boooooooooom!—

The seven-colored light and the dark orb collided, creating a huge shockwave.

—kudududuk—

But soon, the black-colored orb smashed apart the seven-colored light as if it were trying to prove that it was the higher level skill, and almost instantly reached Taehee in control of the boy.

—swoooooosh!—

Though it had been weakened from the collision with the Seven Strands Spear, it was still more than enough to destroy a life.

Even though anybody would freak out if they were to see such a powerful attack approach them, Taehee merely smiled.

—bubble bubble bubble—

The area surrounding Taehee began to bubble.

As if she was being covered in boiling water.

The air and space itself bubbled up.

Affecting Hansoo's attack as well.

As Hansoo's black orb approached Taehee, it gradually started bubbling bit by bit.

And as these two collided—

—booooooooooom!—

—another tremendous shockwave was let loose, shaking the entire perimeter of the place.

And Hansoo frowned at the sight.

“...Elemental Outfit.”

A terrifyingly powerful skill which absorbed the surrounding elements to defend and attack.

For skills at the level of Solo Numbering 1,2, and 3, there wasn't much difference of power between them and the Zero Numberings.

To the point of being able to beat Zero Numberings if the Solo Numbering 1,2, and 3's masteries levels were higher.

From what he could see, Taehee's mastery over this skill was miles and miles ahead of its limit.

‘...The Witch. She was annoying in the past as well.’

Hansoo shook his head as he looked at Taehee walking through

the residue of the explosion.

Though she had the look of a twenty-year-old boy, he could visualize the beauty who had fought so confidently in the past.

A person who had terrifying potential and monstrous skills.

With a personality that enjoyed battles.

She would've been a very good comrade if not for the fact that she had long been blinded by Clementine's vision, skills, and potential.

To the point that she'd been willing to offer up her own life.

'Well, everyone who follows Clementine is like that...'

Anyway, this would not end so quickly now.

Since she wouldn't back down that easily.

—crackle—

As Hansoo tightened his grip on Forked Lightning, Taehee walked out while wearing a colorful outfit that seemed to burn up her surroundings.

"Well, it's been a while, so I didn't want to say goodbye this soon, but this is the end of our reunion it seems."

"Your actions and words contradict themselves, did you know that?"

Taehee smiled at Hansoo, who chuckled after seeing her body burn up even brighter.

"Well, it's not like you're going to just let me go, right?"

Hansoo replied by gripping his spear even tighter.

It was just as she'd said.

He didn't know why she was trying to avoid a fight with him, which meant that this was important.

And since letting them succeed in their plans wouldn't be good

for him— ‘I’ll just...break your legs right here!’

Hansoo smiled coldly.

His strength was overflowing.

Another step closer to his past life’s original power.

The four skills were roaring out from within him.

Use us.

Hurry and use us.

Use us to crush your enemy.

Prove you are superior.

Taehee herself might be an issue, but he didn’t plan on losing to someone being controlled by Taehee.

—boooooooooom!—

Hansoo’s spear and Rangkom’s Stake collided, creating a huge shockwave.

The shockwave continued to extend outwards.

And soon it reached a creature that was rolling around the ground in pain.

The Ark-Roa which was trying its best to suppress the Pandemic Blade.

.....

—rumble—

The shockwave from the distance pricked its skin, but the Ark-Roa had no time to worry about such a thing.

There was something much more important at stake.

“Krrkrrkr....Krrrk.”

The food it had just eaten was rotten beyond reason.

The ones it had eaten were nothing more than empty husks

because all their sources of mana had been devoured by these spores.

It had devoured six, all of which had been filled to the brim with these spores.

It hadn't gained much strength from them, and instead had just received a lot of pain.

"Ugh...Kuhuk."

The pain hadn't reached the point of killing it, though.

It was just a bit annoying.

For something to give this much pain to itself...

The Ark-Roa slowly suppressed the spores as its eyes filled with rage.

Of course it wasn't acting according to its emotions.

The shockwaves from the distance was telling it that this place wasn't safe.

It needed to heal back up, it needed to evolve even more.

It needed...more food.

Much, much more food.

The Arc-Roa started to focus on its left arm.

—swoosh—

The veins, muscles, and mana circuits started to crazily push the spores towards its body.

The spores multiplied at an insane rate to devour its entire left arm, but as they moved, they soon realized that there was much more energy in the actual body.

And after fully curing its left arm of the spear, the Ark-Roa used its right arm to cut its left arm off.

—crunch!—

The Ark-Roa's left arm turned to mush as it fell down to the ground.

—squirm—

There was no blood.

Only a bit of life.

Soon—

Another left arm regenerated.

And shockingly, the same thing was happening to its original left arm.

—wooosh—

—crunch—

The left arm quickly grew larger and larger.

It expanded into a giant, gruesome sphere, about the size of a man, but then started folding into itself.

Grrrrr.

A giant hunting dog came out as a result.

Graaaaar!

As its claws and teeth sprang out, it started to dash away with a roar.

There was no point in giving it an order.

The Ark-Roa was the dog, and the dog was the Ark-Roa.

The Ark-Roa's true body smiled as it looked at the dog while it continued to suppress the spores.

A clone of itself that was created just for the sake of devouring.

Though it had only expanded a bit of strength since it needed to quickly suppress the spores, that dog would be more than enough to sweep apart the entire zone.

Though the remaining beings were weak, once he devoured the millions alive, it would be of great help towards its next stage.

Then he would eat them all.

The ones from below who were going to come up.

And the ones going up.

And everything on the 7th floor as well.

Then...it would have the right to go back to where it had come from.

But there was something it needed to do before that.

Grrrr.

As the Ark-Roa growled out while thinking of the weak, weak human beings who lived upon this land.

—boooom!—

Something flew over and loudly landed next to it.

Then—

A young boy's voice could be heard through the smoke.

“Ah... he really wasn't an easy opponent. Seriously.”

Taehee, who had cut through space to arrive here, smiled as she looked at her empty hand.

She'd been forced to throw away the stake and run away.

And there wasn't much time left now, either.

Since the one who had caused all of this would soon arrive.

‘Ugh, I'll need to finish things up before then... but damn. He's really strong.’

Taehee shook her head as she thought of Hansoo.

She had thought of herself as being quite strong, but it seemed like Hansoo was numerous levels above her.

Although she would win if she brought her true body over since they were in different zones, that didn't even qualify as an excuse.

Since she had come to this world twenty years prior to Hansoo.

Taehee smiled bitterly and shook her head.

She didn't like lingering on useless thoughts.

She just needed to accomplish her objectives.

Taehee then smiled towards the Ark-Roa in front of her.

"It's been a while, right? Since I sent you down here when you were an egg."

"Grrrrrr...."

Though it looked different, the aura was the same.

The past.

Ark-Roa grit its teeth as it saw one of the beings which had turned it to such a mess and had forced it to run away on the elevator.

Chapter 330 : The Grand Scheme (3)

“What the hell...what’s going on?”

—rumble—

Akran, who’d tried to calm down the others back at the War Fortress, freaked out at the storm-like aura that was radiating from the distance.

Lightning shot down as thunder roared out.

From time to time, a vicious aura would burst forth and spread throughout the entire land.

One of the underlings near Akran asked him quietly: “We... we’ll be fine, right? He said it wouldn’t eat ants.”

But Akran could not answer his underling.

Since he couldn’t be certain.

The crazed Ark-Roa’s vicious aura was too terrifying for them to drop their guards just yet.

The bloodthirsty aura it was letting out resembled an animal that had been injured.

Of course, he didn’t have to ponder for long.

Graaarr!

‘...What the hell is that?’

Akran could see something dashing through the tundra in the distance.

He then realized what it was as he roared— “Damn it! Prepare for battle!”

Akran swung out with his sword, staring at the black dog that was approaching them at a terrifying speed.

.....

—boooooom!—

As Hansoo swung out with his spear.

—rummble—

A huge explosion ripped apart the red barrier in the sky.

And for a moment, people could see the sky through the hole in the barrier.

The red barrier, which had more than enough energy to incinerate dozens of people, chased after Hansoo.

—crackle!—

—kwaduk!—

Hansoo continued to walk forward while ripping apart the barrier with his Forked Lightning, and then he suddenly slammed at something that was embedded into the ground.

—boooooom!—

As the Rangkom's Stake in the ground shook from the impact—
—jijijijik!—

—the red silk-like energy chasing after Hansoo abruptly disappeared.

‘Rank 25, Scarlet Hell. She learned a lot, huh?’

Plus, the Rangkom's Stake had been gathering energy for two years.

Hansoo ripped apart the barrier, which had been created from the energy that was within the stake, and then muttered as he looked towards the direction Taehee had gone to.

‘I'm not sure what she's planning.’

The Ark-Roa was there.

Which explained quite a lot of things.

Like how such a major beast like an Arc-Roa had been able to

come this far down.

‘I guess I’ll need to hurry.’

—boooooom!—

Hansoo grasped onto Rangkom’s Stake and then dashed towards the distance.

.....

“Ahh...Eres. Keldian...Kang...Tae. Clementine... Shin Taehee...”

The Ark-Roa continued to repeat the names viciously.

As his intellect rose up, the memories of his past were coming back.

Memories of going around the Abyss and deciding to get on the elevator to eat some tasty things.

Memories of having eaten a lot, but then being caught by those things. And then being beaten to the point of death.

The memory of it being forced down the elevator in its weakened state.

Memories of being sealed the moment it came down to the 4th Zone and then being shoved into that mana node thing.

As it looked at the person in front of it, all those memories flashed through its mind.

The aura inside that person was definitely one of the things that had sent it down here.

‘...I’m still far from healing.’

The Ark-Roa gritted its teeth as it glared at its opponent.

It had neither fully healed, nor had it suppressed the toxins in its body.

And those memories.

Memories of it being destroyed, despite being much more

powerful back then.

The Ark-Roa only pondered for a moment before it came to a decision.

To escape.

Another powerful aura was quickly approaching this location.

And from what it could tell, those two were enemies.

As long as it could escape from this location, the being in front wouldn't chase it down.

And after that, it just needed to heal up using the Hunting Dog it had sent out.

‘I don’t know why you appeared, but I’ll see you later.’

—booom!—

The Ark-Roa quickly started to dash away.

Thousands of spikes—Demeter’s skill—rose up from the ground and towards the man ahead of it.

At the same time, the Ark-Roa’s hands spread out into the air.

—crackle!—

—swooosh!—

Zeus’s lightning shot out from its right hand, and the fog of Dionysus seeped out from its left.

Explosions occurred all around the Ark-Roa as the surroundings melted down.

But the Ark-Roa didn’t let down its guard as it continued to dash away.

—swooosh—

The space beneath the Ark-Roa folded into itself and was distorted.

Hermes’s skill—The God of the Skies.

Of course, the strength behind the skills were dimensions apart despite being the same exact skills.

—zooooom!—

Space cracked apart as the Ark-Roa shot out hundreds of meters away in an instant.

But then—

—kwadudududuuk!—

“Ahh!”

—a hand reached out from the poisonous fog and grasped onto its neck.

—bubble bubble—

The bubbling barrier destroyed the poisonous fog and the lightning.

It even started devouring them.

—squeeze—

‘Grrrr...’

The hand tightened its grip on its neck.

It could not run like this.

The Ark-Roa looked towards the boy who had defended against its lightning and spikes, then used its right arm to smash down on the hand holding onto its neck.

—boom!—

Though she had the Elemental Outfit and the Golden Demon Reinforcement, the Ark-Roa was not a weak beast at all.

A shockwave rang out from the wrist holding onto the Ark-Roa’s neck.

It would be better to just release the Ark-Roa and attack another body part instead of holding onto its neck and doing nothing. But

Taehee continued to grasp its neck, making no move to attack.

No, she even smiled at the Ark-Roa and asked: “Why are you in such a rush?”

“...?”

As she continued to look at the Ark-Roa, Taehee questioned Kael, who was watching all this from within his body.

<Are you sure? Are you really prepared for all this?> Then—Kael, who had been watching the situation, took a deep breath and then nodded.

He’d been ready for this since the day he received the soul fragment.

He was just sad that he couldn’t avenge Jang Oh with his own hands.

‘I wanted to meet Clementine at least once...’

<Thank you for everything. And...I hope you succeed in the future.> Taehee smiled.

<It’s just like Jang Oh told me. You are strong. Good job.> Then—Taehee, in control of Kael’s body, reached out with his left arm.

Towards the open mouth of the Ark-Roa.

—kaaddadak!—

The Ark-Roa instinctively ripped apart the hand but was still shocked.

It had filled its mouth with mana in case the attack was aiming for its head.

But shockingly, the hand was destroyed far too easily.

The mana inside the hand had no power, deathly intent, or skills.

But while the Ark-Roa was thinking in confusion, feeling the sensation of energy it had devoured from the hand— —Taehee felt Hansoo’s aura charging towards this location and said: “Eat.”

Taehee then shoved Kael’s left arm into the Ark-Roa’s mouth.

—crunch—

‘...?’

At first, the Ark-Roa was shocked by these actions, but soon smiled in glee.

Its intellect hadn’t evolved to the point of critical thinking just yet, so there was a limit to what it could determine.

In its mind, there was no reason to decline a free meal.

‘Eat.’

Then—

—crunch—

—kwaduk!—

Countless mouths extended out from various parts of the Ark-Roa and started to devour Taehee.

Anybody would be terrified at the sight of their own body being devoured, but Kael only made an expression of relief as he watched from inside.

‘...Good. Jang Oh, I’m coming. I’m sorry I ran away like a coward before.’

—squirm—

—crack—

The Ark-Roa made strange noises as it devoured the body, mind, and even the soul of Kael.

.....

“Ahhhhh!”

Groaaaarr!

Everybody screamed at the catastrophe that was the black dog.

They were being devoured.

‘...Damn it! Even a dog is this strong now?!’

“Run! Fall back! Everybody split up and run!”

Akran quickly roared.

His decision to try and fight it had not been a good one.

It was not a simple beast.

It was a beast created by the Ark-Roa for the sole purpose of eating.

Of course, such a thing would be much more powerful than them.

It was on the same level as a transcendent.

‘Bastard... Bastard... F***ing bastard!’

Akran gritted his teeth as he ran away.

“Aahahhhh!”

“Uaaaahhh!”

Countless screams echoed out from the surroundings.

That beast was literally ignoring all attacks as it continued to devour them.

‘...We’ll be annihilated at this rate.’

But as Akran fell into despair—

—a miracle occurred.

—boooom!—

Groaaar!

Five beams of light shot down from the skies and smashed into the giant black dog.

And as the black dog roared out from pain— —tatatata—

—four people landed next to Akran.

‘...Taesang? Wait, who are the others?’

But even before Akran could ask—

—booom!—

—the man, Karhal, who seemed to be the leader, sent out another five beams of light and then spoke to Akran.

“We’ll stop it, so run away.”

“...Who are you?”

But as Taesang tried to explain—

“Oh, not me. I’ll leave this to the two of you.”

—Athena spoke to Karhal and Athena from the back.

And Taesang stopped for a moment.

He was a bit disappointed.

‘...I don’t even count, huh?’

He knew he was weak, but he felt sad that she wasn’t even interested in him at all.

Even more so since Athena was so beautiful too.

A woman who made his heart flutter the moment he saw her.

‘...Maybe if I become stronger.’

Taesang looked towards Athena and asked:

“...Where are you going?”

Athena smiled as she replied:

“I’m going to go help Mr. Hansoo.”

‘...She’s going there?’

Karhal mumbled as he looked towards the distance where that monster was residing.

He could sense the bloodthirsty aura that was sweeping towards them like a storm.

Though he knew Athena was stronger than himself, he didn't believe she would dare to help.

Karhal asked Athena:

“...Do you guys know each other?”

If they had met earlier and had a special relationship, then helping in a situation like this made sense.

But Athena replied with a shy expression.

“No no, I'm uh... Just a fan. Ever since the 1st Zone.”

“...Hansoo surely has a lot of fans.”

But Taesang asked with a confused expression as he looked at the blushing Athena in front of him.

“1st Zone? I've never heard of someone like you, though.”

It had been two years since he'd come to this world.

Since she was beautiful and powerful, her name would have spread far and wide.

But Athena smiled.

“Of course, I arrived after you. This is my first year, you see. Shall I call you Senior?”

Chapter 331 : The Grand Scheme (4)

“Annoying. Seriously.”

Hansoo chuckled as he looked at the monster going through a metamorphosis in front of him.

—crunch—

—squirm—

The Ark-Roa’s shape was changing at a rapid pace.

Into the familiar look of that woman from the past.

—crunch crunch—

And soon, a very calming voice came out from the Ark-Roa’s mouth.

“Success.”

Hansoo mumbled at the monster that looked and sounded like Taehee.

“A beast controlled by a soul fragment...”

‘Ingenious.’

A soul fragment could only be implanted into a human.

To let the Ark-Roa devour a being controlled by a soul fragment, and then controlling it.

Of course, if it were as simple as that, then Hansoo wouldn’t have been so shocked.

—squirm—

Taehee, in control of the Arc-Roa’s body, smiled softly at Hansoo.

“Well, there’s still a few things to swap around, but... it looks like it succeeded. Well, anyway, I’m very thankful to you, Mr. Hansoo.”

—sssss—

Taehee continued to speak, all while making strange noises from various parts of her body.

“Our actual plan isn’t for the annihilation of humankind. We just want <omnipotent> strength to control them.”

A perfect system using the soul fragment, the Lord trait, and other traits which allowed for perfect control.

The sad part was the low amount of people with such traits, which led to a low amount of people who could serve under them.

Though a normal person would decide to kill off everyone in case of potential dangers, but Clementine was not a normal person.

“You should understand us more than anybody else, since...you wouldn’t have tried so hard to suppress us if you didn’t.”

They, and Hansoo, only wanted one thing.

A strength that was perfectly controlled.

So they had asked him two years ago.

To join them.

“So? You still want me to join you?”

Taehee nodded.

“You caused the world to collapse, right? We know why you did it. You either didn’t know what would happen if everybody’s strength was limited by that wall or maybe you wanted more strength.”

No one could control billions of people.

But controlling the few transcendents that were born from those people was much more manageable.

Even more so if the controllers were much stronger than the ones being controlled.

“Join us.”

‘Since you are someone even we would want.’

Taehee muttered quietly at Hansoo.

This was the truth.

There was a reason why they had delayed their plans so much.

She was the one that had been against Kael avenging Jang Oh and releasing the Ark-Roa.

Of course, if the Ark-Roa had been released much earlier, they would’ve found Hansoo much earlier as well.

Burying Hansoo, who had been fully capable of controlling the lower zones—something which even they decided was too difficult and had given up on—was too much of a waste.

During these two years, there had been a lot of people as strong as Hansoo.

But even after two years, they had not seen anyone like Kang Hansoo.

‘Other than Clementine.’

Taehee continued to speak to Hansoo.

“How about it? Join us. If you join us, then we have no more reason to fight.”

Hansoo nodded.

“There’s nothing bad about it.”

Taehee’s expression brightened.

A powerful ally was valuable.

They had experienced this already.

Though he’d woken up after two years and the world had changed, the benefits they would gain if Hansoo stood by their side was not something that could easily be measured.

Since a tiger wouldn’t become a cat just because it had woken up

from a deep sleep.

And if they could gain the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd zone that Hansoo controlled?

Nothing more was needed.

“Good. Really good...”

“But I have a condition.”

Taehee stopped for a moment but then nodded as she spoke.

They never expected him to accept that easily anyway.

And they had the capacity to accept all sorts of conditions.

“Speak.”

“You guys said this before, that you wanted to control each other completely.”

The more power they had, the better.

That's why they were performing countless experiments in the upper 3 zones.

Like controlling the Ark-Roa with the soul fragment here at the 4th zone.

But there was one idea that they believed in.

<A power that cannot be controlled is not needed.> So they focused more on controlling strength rather than raising it.

The Ark-Roa experiment looked quite simple, but it had taken a year and hundreds of experiments conducted in the zones above.

But Hansoo only chuckled.

“Sadly, me too. My only condition is for you guys to serve beneath me. If you can agree to that, then I will join you at any time.”

Taehee's expression turned ugly at Hansoo's words.

“I didn't know you were this greedy. Do you know how much

difference there is between us...?”

Hansoo had eaten zones 1, 2, and 3 below.

But they had control of zones 5, 6, and 7 above.

Though the amount was the same, the difference in strength was too vast.

They were offering an alliance, but it wasn't for equal terms.

It was because of the potential of the three zones Hansoo had below.

But Hansoo chuckled.

“Yeah? Then what were you going to do if I agreed to your proposal today?”

“Of course...”

Taehee frowned.

They would implant the soul fragment into Hansoo.

The experiment had succeeded, and Hansoo was countless times more precious than one Ark-Roa anyway.

But they would need to completely <control> Hansoo.

And Hansoo would not agree to such a thing.

Since Hansoo also wanted strength that was under his control.

Taehee finally understood Clementine's words.

<Well. Ask him if you want to, but... he probably won't agree with you.> She assumed he would agree since they had similar thoughts.

But her thoughts were wrong.

Someone who wanted to be in complete command was a control freak.

Just like Clementine.

There was no way two people who needed to be the head would ally themselves.

Even more so if they had a lot of pride.

Hansoo continued to speak.

“And if you wanted an alliance, couldn’t you have just said it before? Why were you hurrying to fuse with the Ark-Roa?”

Taehee stopped short.

She’d wanted to talk about the alliance first.

But the reason why she’d fused with the Ark-Roa was because of Clementine.

<Right. If you go down, fuse with the Ark-Roa first.> She now knew why Clementine had told her to.

Hansoo smiled coldly.

“Were you going to smash me apart and force me to accept if I declined?”

This damned world.

The most important thing wasn’t ambition, but rather the strength to back it up.

The strength to smash apart their opponents’ ambitions.

Taehee smiled as she said:

“Yes... that seems to be the case.”

“Since you guys are different from me.”

Then—

—boooooom!—

Tremendous amounts of energy exploded out from Hansoo and smashed into the Ark-Roa.

Though it was sudden, Taehee had expected it the moment their conversation had ended, and had been able to block it.

There was a limit to a soul fragment's durability.

But it didn't matter.

Since it was useless for them to talk further.

Her opponent would need to become a bit more...weak...to continue their discussion.

—rummble!—

“Good! We now know that you won't be controlled by us. That means...you don't care about those coming up from below, right?”

She should have threatened him like this from the start.

Taehee smiled as she muttered:

‘We'll come back to you in a bit. Will your thoughts be the same even then?’

—swooooosh—

Taehee's consciousness started to fade away from inside the Ark-Roa's body.

“Grrrr...GRAAAAAARR!”

A huge roar echoed out from the Ark-Roa which had just regained its body.

It may have lost its control, but it still remembered.

Remembered everything that had happened.

It should have been roaming around the Abyss, but instead, it had been shackled down by a trick.

It would never be able to escape from these shackles now.

Since the fragment that had been embedded into its soul could still suppress and control it.

Its rage was then directed at the person in front of it.

“F***ing...f***ing humans! Kill...kill them all!”

Its improved intellect had searched through its brain for a fitting word, but it was being blinded by rage.

—booom!—

Strength exploded out from the Ark-Roa.

Strength that was dimensions apart from its greatly weakened state from mere moments ago.

‘...Well. It devoured an entire 2 star transcendent, makes a lot of sense.’

Hansoo defended against the attack, and as he was preparing to defend the next one by raising his spear— —boooooom!—

—something quickly flew in from the distance and smashed into the Ark-Roa’s side.

‘A flail?’

Then—

—tatatatata!—

Swiftly flying from the same location, a human landed next to him and said: “I came to help.”

A pleasant attitude and voice, as well as having a lot of strength.

Receiving such aid was always nice in a situation like this.

If he could trust her, of course.

Hansoo spoke out coldly.

“I don’t think I’ll need it.”

‘One of the twelve, huh?’

Why had he declined Clementine?

Because he didn’t trust powerhouses whose limits had been broken.

Even more so if she was one of the twelve, which had flipped the 4th zone upside down.

Since she had been able to hide up until now, she seemed to have a few tricks up her sleeve. But that was it.

—SSSSS—

Red smoke rose up from his hand.

‘One’s already hard to deal with, but two...wait...I feel like I’ve seen her before.’

Hansoo frowned.

Then—

<I will always follow you, mister.>

A long-lost memory rose up from his mind.

“...Kiriel.”

And as Hansoo unconsciously mumbled the word—

“Ho...how do you know my name?”

Athena asked in shock.

Chapter 332 : Mjölnir (1)

‘I finally met him, but...’

Kiriell, who had been excited at meeting Hansoo, was confused.

Her seniors, who had acted as her teachers and comrades, had always talked about the past. It had been this way ever since she had come into this world, all throughout the 1st Zone to the 3rd Zone.

They talked about how much of a hell the previous world had been, unlike the systemized world of the present.

How they had to survive in such a world and grow stronger.

Of course, she wasn't interested in all this.

Since it had only taken her a month or two to catch up to them.

Instead, every time she heard this story, her attention had settled on a single man.

Who was he really?

How did he revive that giant World Tree?

How did he tame the continent-sized beasts?

How did he annihilate the sages who'd treated humans like slaves?

And how did he turn the world from a terrifying hell to a place that was actually livable?

It had started off as curiosity, but soon grew into hope and a form of respect.

And as she grew stronger, she felt herself getting closer to this man.

So she had trained like a madman and chased after his footsteps.

But there was a difference between wanting to meet her idol and

seeing them act weird.

‘He knows my name?’

Kiriell muttered in confusion.

Her knowing the name of this man, Hansoo, was obvious.

Since she was his fan and her trait was more focused on things like this.

But Hansoo shouldn’t know about her.

Since she’d come up here in the two years Hansoo had been asleep.

She had only been in this world for a year.

‘I’ve never even told my name to anyone in this zone...’

But there was no time to listen to his reply.

—booom!—

Since the Ark-Roa’s rage-filled attack was still shooting towards them.

‘Damn!’

Kiriell freaked out at the long metal spears that shot out from the ground, and Hansoo smiled sheepishly after realizing what he’d done.

‘I’ve made a mistake.’

He’d accidentally blurted out her name since it had been so sudden.

—booom!—

Hansoo dodged the attack the Ark-Roa aimed at Kiriell and looked at her.

He couldn’t believe it.

It made sense that Kiriell was already this strong.

Since her talent was top notch, even in his past life when she was still alive.

But no matter what their relationship had been in his past life.

He didn't know how this woman might have changed.

Even more so if she had been mingling with the twelve.

Of course, their powerful opponent was also an issue.

—boooooom!—

“Kill...them...ALL!”

Thousands of spikes rose up from the ground to block their path of escape, and its body was covered in lightning and flames.

—kaaddduduk!—

The Ark-Roa, which had returned to its former black humanoid form, dashed through the melted land surrounding it and swung its fists at him.

—kwadduduk!—

Hansoo could no longer dodge, and had to block it with his hands, but the impact caused his hands to shake from the tremendous amount of force behind the Ark-Roa's fists.

‘It ate too damn much.’

It would put him in a bad situation if he turned Kiriell into an enemy, especially since he needed her strength to slightly improve their chances.

But the moment Kiriell saw Hansoo's face, she started to frown.

“It's because you can't trust me, right?”

Hansoo sighed at her words.

‘Do you know what I've done to meet you?’

Kiriell thought of her past.

She would need to become stronger to continue following him.

She had always accepted this fact even as she offered Hansoo her help.

She knew what had happened to those who accompanied him in the beginning.

Since she had devoted all her spare time outside of training into researching such things.

Even if the world had changed, it was always nice to be a beauty.
And even more so to be a powerhouse.

After countless hours of research, she had come to a conclusion.

Though they had been left behind to manage the lower zones, there was a truth hidden behind those words..

‘They couldn’t keep up.’

She would not chase after him from behind.

She would stand by his side and watch over him.

She didn’t go through with the nursery, and evaded the eyes of the others while she hunted down the beasts of the Abyss.

Since according to her trait, Hansoo wouldn’t like something like the nursery.

The only way to become stronger was to hunt.

She had devoted almost 24 hours of every day to chase after Hansoo, who could appear at any time.

But for her to see those cold and harsh eyes after finally being able to meet him...

But Kiriel soon shook her head.

‘No, it makes sense.’

She had expected this the moment she involved herself with the twelve.

To gain his trust, she was going to bring the heads of the other

twelve, as well as the head of the one who had created her, but the thing in front of her had done it before she could.

Of course, the answer was simple.

She just needed to offer the monster instead.

‘Lets...GO!’

—boom!—

Kiriell grasped the flail, a weapon she’d been fortunate to come across, and one that she treated dearly, and charged towards the Ark-Roa currently dashing towards Hansoo.

—boooooom!—

She then smashed her flail into the Ark-Roa’s head.

.....

—boooooom!—

“Roaaar! A...Athena! Why are you doing this?!”

The Ark-Roa’s body squirmed around after being beaten down a few times.

The Ark-Roa’s body instantly changed to look like Aphrodite.

It was a cheap tactic, but it wasn’t aiming to achieve something great out of this.

Just a single moment.

It just needed a single flinch.

But Aphrodite’s looks were not enough.

Since Kiriell actually hated her right now.

“What the hell are you saying?”

—boooooom!—

‘You scrubs are the reason why he suspects me.’

Kiriell smashed away the face of the Ark-Roa that had tried to

approach her looking like Aphrodite.

‘But yeah... this isn’t easy.’

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

Kiriell frowned as she smashed away the opponent.

Her hand was actually tingling.

And as if the Ark-Roa was getting used to everything, its movements were becoming faster and even more subtle than before.

As well as the power of its skills.

—kwadddudk!—

‘Ugh!’

Lightning now covered the metal spikes that rose up from the ground.

Meaning that its strength was rising.

—boooooom!—

Kiriell frowned as she sent out a few skills from the energy stored within the flail.

‘Mmm...this is going to be hard to do alone. What am I going to do?’

She had jumped in to prove herself to Hansoo, but it wasn’t easy.

And according to her trait, she lacked the skills suited for this situation.

At that moment—

“Move.”

—boooooooooom!—

“Groaaaar!”

—a small orb shot past Kirie’s shoulder and smashed into the Ark-Roa.

The Ark-Roa screamed out in pain as Kiriel looked at Hansoo with glee.

“You trust me?”

She had felt that she hadn’t done enough to gain his trust, but for him to agree to fight with her already...

But of course, Hansoo hadn’t interfered because he fully trusted her.

‘...I can’t just watch.’

Though he kept telling himself that the Kiriel of the past and the current Kiriel were different people.

As he watched her fight, his past memories kept on rising up.

And they couldn’t drag this out any longer since the Ark-Roa was getting stronger.

‘...Kill the Ark-Roa first, and then decide.’

Roaaar!

While Kiriel had been buying time, he attacked with a combination of seven dragons from the Nine Dragons Spear, but the Ark-Roa was already regenerating.

And as Hansoo watched this, more dragons started to gather around his hand.

‘Mmm... if we’re going to fight, then...’

Hansoo pondered for a moment, and then took off the Arham’s shield on his left wrist.

And deactivated the Rangkom’s stake on his left hand.

He then threw them towards Kiriel.

—swoosh!—

“Huh...?”

Kiriel looked at Hansoo in confusion.

‘Might as well.’

He had already spoken her name, it would be impossible to dodge her suspicions.

He decided to use his knowledge of the past to dodge around it later. He spoke to Kiriel: “Read it with your trait.”

“Huh?”

“Hurry. Use your Psychometry to read those three.”

Kiriel was in shock.

‘...He even knew about that?’

—boooooom!—

Kiriel stared at Hansoo in confusion as he attacked the Ark-Roa with his Nine Dragons Spear.

.....

Psychometry.

Her trait.

The ability to read the past memories of objects, the surrounding land, and lifeforms.

A trait which she had never told to anyone.

She had been able to read the traces of her senior’s battles and become stronger.

She could tell if someone was lying.

She had been able to confirm Hansoo’s achievements that others could only hear of in tales.

The battle at the corner of the World Tree.

The battle within the giant white lion, Lazar.

The annihilation of the sages inside the giant underground birdcage in the 3rd zone.

And this trait was the most useful when scanning an artifact.

She was able to find out every secret and method of use hidden within an artifact.

Though most other adventurers couldn't follow the ancient uses of mana that were different from modern-day methods.

She could.

Maybe it was a blessing from the gods.

She had even been able to learn the spells of the old Empire which had been engraved on the flail.

Hansoo shouted at Kiriel:

“Read all three!”

Hansoo realized something on his way here.

The three godly artifacts of the Empire.

Arham's shield.

God's flail.

Rangkom's stake.

They'd initially been split up because they had to be used separately for different reasons, but— It was originally a single object.

The strange hole on the flail.

The strange indent on Arham's shield.

The few protrusions on Rangkom's stake.

Miraculously, these strange features fit each other perfectly.

But these weren't some random lego blocks.

A method to use them was needed.

And even he could not figure that out.

But, Kiriel.

Kiriel could with her Psychometry.

But Kiriel was hesitating.

“...If I use that then you’ll have to fight alone!”

Roaaaar!

—boom!—

Kiriel shouted worriedly as she looked at the Ark-Roa’s terrifying attacks.

Psychometry wasn’t that easy to use.

She needed to focus deeply in order to read the details.

And she wouldn’t be able to fight during that time.

She wouldn’t be able to defend herself either.

But as if it felt her hesitation.

“Kaha!”

The Ark-Roa, which had been fighting Hansoo, extended its arm towards Kiriel.

—shhhhhshsh!—

It used Hephaestus's skill, <Body extension>, and extended its arm out several dozens of meters, reaching for her neck.

‘Damn...’

As Kiriel was about to swing her flail—

—boom!—

—Hansoo flew in from the distance and blocked the attack in front of her.

‘Reminds me of the past.’

Hansoo smiled towards Kiriel and said:

“Don’t worry about it, and hurry. I will guard you.”

And as she saw that smile—

“Ah...yes.”

—Kiriell blushed and then started to focus on the three artifacts.

And soon—

—SSSSS—

—Kiriell’s consciousness got sucked into the artifacts as Hansoo watched.

‘You’ll be able to figure it out. Why...for what reason they were created. And who created it.’

This was not something the Empire could make.

Rooooaaaar!

Hansoo mumbled as he smashed away at the Ark-Roa charging towards him.

Chapter 333 : Mjölnir (2)

—kiriririring—

Kiriel was quickly reading through the memories within the three godly artifacts.

With a slight blush on her face.

‘That wasn’t so bad, right? He said he would guard me.’

Perhaps he wasn’t yet interested in her, but at least she had become a bit more trustable.

He wouldn’t give her such precious artifacts otherwise.

‘He fought with Jang Oh, huh?... He fought by himself a lot of the time, too...’

The memories were not in the God’s Flail, but inside the Rangkom’s Stake, and Arham’s Shield.

Kiriel smiled as she read the memories of Hansoo’s battles, and focused as she delved deeper and deeper.

The surrounding space quickly passed by as she went further and further into the past.

The days of when the flail had been below the ground of the Kingdom.

The days of when the Rangkom’s Stake had been embedded into the White Dragon Arena.

Faster, and faster.

But soon—

—chiiiiik—

She reached a formless barrier that prevented her from delving further into the past.

‘...This is it. This is where I got stuck before.’

Psychometry didn't allow her to delve into everything.

Since things like emotions or thoughts could get erased with time.

The memory she could see with just the flail only reached up to the days of the Kingdoms and the Empire.

So memories past those one thousand years were actually hard to see.

‘But... if it's all three... ’

Kiriel breathed in and started to scan through the memories of all three at once.

—crack—

—crack crack—

Countless memory fragments started to move towards her consciousness and fit together like puzzle pieces inside her head.

She mixed together the memory pieces from the three artifacts, and delved deeper.

Then—

sssss...

As the memories of the three artifacts fused, the blurry images of the past started to clear up.

And soon—

—papak!—

‘I got through!’

A crystal clear scene unfolded before her eyes as she continued to delve deeper and deeper.

The scene was of a man powerful beyond reason, surrounded in a white aura.

And the giant hammer in his hands.

She knew the name of the man already.

Though the Rangkom's Stake had lost some memories, it would not forget its owner which had owned it for a thousand years.

‘Tiamet...’

And a voice came into her her mind.

<I...need to disassemble this now. This is too dangerous.>
‘Disassemble?’

Then—

—swoosh!—

A tremendous amount of energy poured into the hammer— —
boooooom!—

—and then abruptly exploded.

—clank—

—crack!—

The light subsided as three objects appeared in place of the hammer.

And Kiriell realized why it had been so hard to remember the memories of the past.

‘...This was why it wasn't possible, huh?’

Of course it would be hard for one object to retain the memories from its days of being three.

Even more so if it was a memory from a thousand years ago.

The handle of the hammer popped out as it became the stake.

The head of the hammer remained like a giant end of a flail.

The flat part of the hammer's head, which was made to smash into the enemies, popped off and turned into a shield-like object.

And Kiriell focused on this scene to memorize the method Tiamat had used to disassemble the hammer.

Since she might be able to recreate that hammer if she used that method in reverse.

Like Hansoo had thought, despite being a very complex method, Kiriel's trait allowed her to memorize it quickly.

‘...Shall I go back?’

Kiriel mumbled; she had completely memorized the methods after replaying the memory a few times.

But then—

‘... But who made this?’

She started to get curious.

It might've been hard for her to do it before, but since the artifacts had come together, it would be possible to see it.

The origins of that hammer.

If she saw how the hammer had been created, she would be able to see how to use the hammer better as well.

‘And he had disassembled it because it was a dangerous weapon... Why was it dangerous?’

At this point—

—the corner of her mind that wanted to be of a bigger help to Hansoo kept on calling out to her.

She also wanted to surprise Hansoo as well.

But she shook her head.

‘I must go and help.’

Though not much time would've passed in real life, she was worried at the fact that Hansoo was holding on by himself.

But as she was about to stop her Psychometry—

—kiriririririk!—

‘Huh? Ahhhh?!’

—she was suddenly bombarded with memories, each scene rolling back with increasing speed.

‘What the hell! What went wrong?!’

While she was still lost in shock, her consciousness was sucked in.

Deeper and deeper into the past.

.....

—rumble—

‘She’s taking a bit longer than I thought.’

Hansoo stole a glance at Kiriel, who was still in a daze, and then looked back at the Ark-Roa who was focusing on something.

“Is it tasty?”

—crunch crunch—

The Ark-Roa, who had been chomping on Hansoo’s left arm, smiled.

With a leisurely expression.

Hansoo looked back and forth between his shoulder where his arm got ripped off and at Kiriel, and then clutched his spear more tightly.

‘My left arm will regrow, but... the weapon is an issue... I don’t know if this was the right choice.’

The half-broken Forked Lightning swung from side to side.

And Hansoo sighed at this sight.

‘...It’s a Solo Numbering weapon. I guess it isn’t enough anymore.’

It wasn’t just the Forked Lightning that had been wrecked.

Hansoo looked at the half-destroyed Thousand Soldiers Armor, then shrugged.

When he'd woken up, his Nurmaha's ring was long gone, and the two usable artifacts he'd had left were at the point of breaking apart.

Hansoo chuckled at what a miserable sight he made.

Well, it made a lot of sense.

Solo Numbering artifacts meant that they were the best artifacts of the seven zones.

Though they were top-notch artifacts that had saved his life countless times, ever since the seven zones had collapsed and people started crossing the barrier, these weapons just couldn't keep up with the changes.

He needed better artifacts.

But the issue was that, as of right now, there was nowhere for him to gain any.

'It would've been nice if I still had the Nurmaha.'

Hansoo muttered, thinking of the ring which had mysteriously disappeared.

Though it was in the lower ranks of the Solo Numbering, it was still a very powerful artifact.

Being ranked ninth, it was actually more useful than the sixth ranked Thousand Soldiers Armor, and even the Forked Lightning.

'Well, how I obtained it was abnormal as well...'

He felt like there was something he didn't know about, but there was no point in grieving over it since it was already gone.

No matter how good it was, if it wasn't in his hands then it was even more useless than this broken-down spear.

'...I knew this would happen to you eventually whenever you were bent like that in the past.'

Hansoo looked at the spear and sighed out loud.

He then applied some force and broke it apart.

—snap—

Despite him being a transcendent, it shouldn't be a weapon that could break this easily, but it had still done so way too effortlessly.

It had already reached its limits.

'You've done well so far. Please... hold on for just a bit longer.'

Hansoo held onto the half with the blade, and fed the bottom half to his armor.

—crunch crunch—

—crunch—

A mouth appeared on the chest of the armor, and it started to devour the halved Forked Lightning.

Soon, the silver armor started to repair itself, with bits of gold appearing to fill in the cracks.

'This should be good enough.'

Though the range of his attacks had been considerably reduced, there was no point in using a spear that was already cracked in the middle since he wouldn't be able to fully utilize its strength.

It was better to use it as a short spear and feed the rest to reinforce his armor.

But the Thousand Soldiers Armor was not the only thing that had finished its meal.

—crunch—

"Keke."

The Ark-Roa smiled after having finished eating Hansoo's left arm.

And soon—

—booom!—

—the Ark-Roa roared and charged at Hansoo.

Towards Kiriel, who was behind Hansoo.

‘What a smart kid.’

As Hansoo moved into a defensive position to block the Ark-Roa
— —kwaddduduk!—

—another arm extended out from its chest and smashed into Hansoo’s spear.

Usually, he would just block something like this.

But then the Ark-Roa’s left hand would kill Kiriel.

—crunch!—

Hansoo felt his chest being destroyed, and thought of Kiriel behind him.

If he gave her up, it would be a much easier battle.

And that made sense as well.

He didn’t know what Kiriel would bring, but the current situation wasn’t very optimistic.

But he decided to just follow his heart.

‘Ugh, just treat it as a form of repayment. After all... you died for me.’

—boooooom!—

Hansoo ignored the pain coming up from his chest as he used the short spear in his right arm to stab down on the Ark-Roa’s left hand.

—boom!—

“Kuahaha!”

Though its left hand had been penetrated, the Ark-Roa continued to smile.

The dull blade of the half-broken spear wasn’t strong enough to

go through its defenses and its regenerative speed.

There wasn't even a need to aim for the girl behind him either.

The Ark-Roa started frenziedly attacking the now-easier opponent.

—boom! boom!—

The Ark-Roa's fists swapped around quickly from a sword, hammer, and then to a spear.

Whichever weapon was the best for attacking Hansoo's body.

—crunch!—

—boom!—

Every time it blocked an attack, the remaining half of Forked Lightning bent and cracked apart even more.

And then—

—clank!—

The blade of the Forked Lightning broke apart into small fragments.

‘Dumbass.’

Hansoo fed the remaining bits of the spear to his armor, and then changed his posture to attack with his one remaining arm.

‘I kept telling myself not to be blinded by the past.’

Hansoo chuckled.

He'd thought that he wouldn't.

But he'd been doing it up until now.

But it seemed to differ from person to person.

And the Ark-Roa, after watching Hansoo for a moment, started to charge towards him again.

—boom!—

To finish off it's now-weaponless enemy.

The man hadn't been its opponent even when his weapon was intact.

And now he was barehanded, and even missing an arm.

‘Looks... tasty.’

As the Ark-Roa started dashing towards him—

—charrurururk—

—clank—

—clang—

—a strange clanking noise, like something being assembled, could be heard behind Hansoo.

The sounds of metal smashing into one another.

Then—

“Mr Hansoo! Catch!”

—swooshwooshwoosh—

Something quickly flew towards Hansoo from behind.

As the Ark Roa felt the terrifying aura, it started to quickly move its arm to try and intercept it.

‘Heh, what do you think you’re doing?’

Hansoo pulled his head back, and then smashed it into the head of the Ark-Roa.

—boom!—

“Ahh!”

As the Ark-Roa, who had been solely focused on its right hand, flinched from the impact— —Hansoo reached back with his right hand and caught the object flying towards him.

‘Good. Very good.’

Hansoo smiled at the sensation that was rising up his arm.

The solid feeling it was giving off...

It was different from the shield and the stake.

‘Well met, friend.’

Hansoo then tightened his grip.

—swoosh!—

Swinging out with his right arm, he smashed the Ark-Roa’s head.

—boom!—

Though the head had been hit, a loud noise rang out.

“Kuaaaaahhh!”

And as the Ark-Roa screamed, while grasping onto its head— —
chchchchchzzzzhzhch!—

The sky split apart as a humongous bolt of lightning, hundreds of times thicker than that of Zeus’s, shot down.

Chapter 334 : Mjölnir (3)

“Karhal! Focus!”

“Damnit! I’m as focused as can be!”

—boom!—

Karhal screamed as he beat at the crazed dog.

He’d thought that it would be a comfortable fight since it was just a clone.

But what the hell was this?

This crazed dog was not at all simple.

‘Damn... Is this the difference between 1 and 2 stars? To the point of needing two people for just a clone?’

And it wasn’t like they could escape.

Since everyone running away right now would just become its food if he fled.

—booom!—

Karhal, who had just smashed away the dog as it leapt towards him again, looked shocked at the rebound force he’d just felt in his hands.

‘It feels weaker?’

Karhal then looked towards the mountain range, at the giant bolts of lightning shooting down on it.

.....

—boooooom!—

“Uaaaahh!”

The Ark Roa roared out in pain from being smashed over and over again by a giant hammer.

—boom!—

—boom! boom!—

Countless spikes rose up everytime the Ark-Roa smashed down with its feet, causing lightning, fire, and poisonous clouds to rise up.

Hundreds of meters of land around it had melted down.

But—

—boom!—

—kaduduk!—

“Roaaar!”

The Ark-Roa absorbed the impact of the hammer with its body, and then attempted to retaliate.

—crunch!—

—rummmblee—

The sky continued to split apart as lightning crackled from above.

—boom!—

‘Ah... ahh!’

The Ark-Roa couldn’t even scream out loud after being hit by this lightning, and instead screamed inside its mind.

Because it had skills to control lightning, it had some natural resistance to lightning itself, but this thing was on a whole other level.

It felt as if its entire body was burning up.

The moment it was hit, every nerve fiber on its body seemed to scream with pain.

His central nervous system, and even his muscles were paralyzed in an instant.

And soon—

“Uaaaaah!”

—boom!—

The Ark-Roa could not withstand the power of the hammer, and it was flung back into the mountain in the distance.

—rummble!—

Hansoo smiled as he looked at the hammer that had sent the Ark-Roa flying.

‘It’s more than I expected.’

He’d known it would be quite useful once fused.

Since each of those artifacts were incredibly powerful on their own.

But after using it in its fused state, the Forked Lightning was nothing compared to this.

Even though he couldn’t even use it to its full potential, it was still showing such a tremendous amount of strength.

So he became even more curious of its origins.

‘This definitely isn’t something the humans of the past could make.’

He was certain that this wasn’t made by the Empire.

He suspected that it might be the apex of technology of the ancient humans, but he’d come to a realization after using the hammer and seeing its design.

That the ancient humans hadn’t made it.

An alloy that even a transcendent could freely utilize wasn’t something that was easy to make, even for them. And there was no reason for them to make such a close-combat weapon like this.

Why would they, who had made countless long-range skills, make a weapon like this?

‘What did... Kiriel see?’

But Hansoo decided to ask these questions later.

Since that wasn’t the main issue.

‘Yeah, you should be hungry by now.’

—boom! boom! boom!—

Hansoo started to chase after the Ark-Roa, which had stomped off towards the War Fortress.

.....

‘Hungry. Hungry... HUNGRY.’

—boom! boom! boom!—

The Ark-Roa’s expression was full of pain.

Though its body was regenerating quickly, it didn’t mean that it wasn’t suffering.

The Ark-Roa looked furious as it suppressed the pain that was rising up from all over its body.

How had the situation turned out like this?

Not only was it shocked at being tricked by a human, it was now being beaten to death by another.

That weapon.

That mysterious weapon was too terrifying.

It felt like it had seen the weapon before, but couldn’t quite remember.

Chills ran down its back and its teeth clattered.

The Ark-Roa ran, gritting its teeth.

There was only one reason why it had become so miserable.

‘Strength... I’m not strong enough.’

This was all because it hadn’t eaten enough.

This wasn't the time to pick out the tasty meats.

It needed to devour everything and anything.

The Ark-Roa glared furiously at the War Fortress in the distance.

As well as at the two transcendents fighting with its clone.

It would become even stronger with two more pieces of food.

It felt the aura of that man chasing after it, but the Ark-Roa smirked.

That man would not be able to catch up to it.

—boom!—

The skill, <God of the Skies> activated, and its movement speed rose up explosively.

The man chasing it from behind had fought well.

It respected him to a degree.

But his bodily abilities were inferior compared to itself, and he didn't have any movement skills.

By the time that man arrived, everything would have ended—it would have devoured everything.

'I can win... Eat. I can eat.'

He had only obtained a new weapon; his body was still damaged.

It just needed to become a bit stronger.

Actually, just absorbing the clone itself would be enough.

'I'm going to... shred you apart!'

It was going to destroy everything.

Him and his entire race.

Arriving at the War Fortress, the Arc-Roa extended its arm with a gleeful smile.

—swoooosh!—

He activated Hephaestus's skill, <Body Extension>, making its arm spread out hundreds of meters long.

Towards the two who were looking at him in shock.

‘Devour!’

But then—

—boooooom!—

A loud noise was heard—its hand was blocked.

—kiiriririk—

‘What!?’

The Ark-Roa was at a loss for words.

The only thing that could block it was still far away behind it.

And the two it was aiming for were way too weak to block its attack.

“Phew. Safe!”

A woman's voice could be heard from the dust cloud rising up from the collision.

And the moment it heard the woman's voice— “Damn it!”

—boom!—

—the Ark-Roa's expression turned ugly as it charged towards Athena who'd managed to stop it.

There was no time for something like this.

It needed to quickly devour those two people, and its clone, to regain its strength.

—boom!—

—boom! boom!—

Kiriel and the Ark-Roa started to fight each other.

‘Ugh... just a musclehead.’

As she fought without her weapon, Kiriel frowned at the pain she was feeling from all over her body.

The Ark-Roa's attacks were not easy to defend with just her unprotected body.

Each attack felt like she was being smashed with an iron hammer.

The pain drove all the way into her bones.

Plus the Ark-Roa's strange skin kept creating mouths to bite her.

—crunch!—

—gnaw gnaw—

The Ark-Roa successfully bit a chunk of flesh off, and looked at Kiriel who was now frowning in pain.

‘It hurts...’

Kiriel frowned at the pain from her arm, but then smiled at the Ark-Roa.

“Are you sure you have time for this?”

The moment the Ark-Roa saw Kiriel's expression— —it woke up from its gluttonous stupor.

But it was too late.

—swoosh!—

“Where are you going?”

Kiriel quickly hugged the Ark-Roa, which had attempted to dash backwards.

And at the same time, Kiriel's body turned extremely heavy.

To the point that it was unable to carry her and run away.

“Ahhhh! Damn it!”

It wouldn't be able to run away like this.

—boom!—

The Ark-Roa felt danger, and released an endless torrent of flames and clouds of poison.

To melt down Kiriel.

‘Die.’

Rooooaar!

The hunting dog that was supposed to return to it was now being held back by the two transcendents as well.

At this rate it really was going to die.

Only by killing this girl would it have a sliver of a chance to live.

But at that moment, a small voice came out from Kiriel.

“Do I pass?”

And an answer came from behind the Ark-Roa.

“For now.”

—boooooooooooooom!—

“Kuaaaaaah!”

The Ark-Roa’s head exploded with a tremendous amount of pain, and it was flung away in agony.

Of course, it didn’t get far.

Hansoo caught the Ark-Roa with his already-regenerated left arm, then smashed it into the ground, muttering quietly as he stepped onto its back.

“Try withstanding this.”

—crackle—

‘...’

The Ark-Roa caught sight of the hammer as it struggled to escape.

Bolts of lightning struck down around the hammer.

And only at the gate of death did the Ark-Roa remember where it had seen this before.

The weapon it had forgotten about, along with the disappearance of its power.

‘Ah... the abyss...’

From above the Ark-Roa—

—swoooosh!—

—the hammer in Hansoo’s hand began to descend.

.....

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

‘Ahhh... Are there no crystals or anything? Will that be destroyed too?’

Kiriell frowned at the Ark-Roa, which was currently being turned into a paste of meat, and backed off.

There was nothing else for her to do, and there was something she needed to think about.

She thought back to when she’d been forcibly sucked into the past.

‘Nepallem... Who the hell are you?’

Nepallem.

The one who had dragged her consciousness into the past against her will.

And the original owner of the hammer.

—boooooom!—

While the Ark-Roa was being pulverized, along with half a mountain range, Kiriell frowned as she thought back to what she

had seen in that memory.

Chapter 335 : Mjölnir (4)

‘...Who the hell are you, really?’

Kiriell thought back to that memory of the past as she stared at the hammer being swung in front of her.

.....

—swoooooosh!—

‘Haa...Haaa..’

Kiriell remained calm despite having been forcibly sucked into the memory, and focused on looking around at her surroundings.

There must be a reason why the memory reader had taken her back against her will.

Kiriell looked around and sighed when she realized that she’d seen this place before.

‘Mmm... It’s not unfamiliar, but... why am I here...?’

Kiriell muttered, looking around the room at the top of the Obelisk.

This was a place she had visited in order to find traces of Hansoo during the period of time she’d roamed around the entire 4th Zone after him.

Though most things that could retain memories would melt away from a huge explosion, she could still see the glory of its past.

She wasn’t really curious or shocked at the giant Obelisk that was working at full capacity.

She was rather curious as to why her Psychometry had brought her here.

Then—

“Hmm... Good.”

A voice was heard from the corner of the room, and her neck spun around towards its direction.

And then frowned.

The giant hammer was in the middle of the room.

—crackle—

She didn't know what had been done to the hammer, but lightning was crackling around it, and everything else in the room near the hammer had been burnt black.

And the man who was smiling at the hammer...

The voice had to have come from that man.

'Who...?'

A slightly feeble-looking body.

He looked way too weak in comparison to Tiamet, but his researcher-like looks attracted her curiosity even more.

Since this person might be related to the creator of the hammer.

The man, who had been looking at the hammer in the luxurious room at the top of the Obelisk, looked towards the empty space and said: "Welcome, my precious guest,"

'...What? Seriously?'

"Don't be shocked. I'm really talking to you."

Kiriél freaked out at the man who was staring directly at where her consciousness was.

'No way!'

A memory was something she read.

Normally, the memory didn't react to her presence.

—clank—

An ominous feeling ran through her, and she tried to cancel her trait and escape, but it was useless.

It was as if she was being held down.

“Don’t be shocked. I mean you no harm. I just tried it out for fun.”

“...Who are you?”

The man then seemed to realize something, and exclaimed: “I’ve forgotten to introduce myself!”

The man pointed towards the hammer on the ground.

“I am called Nepallem, greetings.”

“...”

Kiriell, who’d been listening to his words in a daze, asked: “Did you bring me here?”

Nepallem chuckled as he replied:

“I didn’t call you, you just got sucked in while trying to read the Mjölnir’s memories.”

“...Mjölnir?”

Nepallem nodded.

“Yes. That hammer over there.”

—chiiiiik—

Nepallem pointed towards the hammer currently emitting smoke in the middle of the room.

A hammer that did not look like something simple.

‘...So that’s what it looks like when it’s fused.’

Kiriell looked at the hammer—it was letting off sparks and burning the contents of the room. She recalled what Hansoo had wanted her to find out, so she asked Nepallem: “Did you make that?”

This current situation as a whole made no sense, but she wasn’t the type to argue about something that was already happening.

The most important thing was gathering intel.

The man seemed quite friendly, which meant she had nothing to fear for now.

‘I need to ask as much as I can.’

But Nepallem shook his head with a smile.

“No. I did not make it.”

“Then...”

“I brought it.”

“...?”

‘Brought it? From where?’

Nepallem looked at Kiriel, who was tilting her head in confusion, and then shook his finger.

“Telling you everything would be a bit too much. Anyway, I brought it to help a few people below, but... it seems to be too strong in this form.”

Nepallem thought of Tiamet, who would be proceeding to perform his revenge, and smiled as he touched the Mjöltnir with his finger.

Then—

—pachchchchciiik!—

The lines on Mjöltnir’s surface radiated a golden light, and the hammer gradually grew weaker. Kiriel’s brows rose up at this sight.

‘It turned into three pieces.’

It still looked like a hammer, but it was different.

Since the flow of mana inside it had turned into three separate circuits of their own.

At this rate, those individual pieces wouldn’t be able to use even

half of half of half of half of the original's power.[a]

Nepallem looked kindly at Kiriell, and explained with a smile.

“This should fit this world's level a bit more.”

Was it necessary to break the Mjölnir down to Tiamet's level?

But since he had restructured the hammer to be disassembled, Tiamet would put it to good use.

He could either wield the hammer to destroy the world.

Or use them separately in places he needed to.

It didn't matter anyway.

Since both outcomes would be fun.

Nepallem, who had been smiling at the hammer, spoke to Kiriell.

“Apparently, it's been fused again. Though there are still some restrictions but... Congratulations.”

Nepallem congratulated Kiriell, and shook her hand.

“Goodbye, then. Be careful when wielding it. Since it's not a simple object. Remember who the owner is.”

—swoooooosh!—

‘Huh... uhh?’

Kirie's consciousness suddenly started to return to reality at a tremendous speed.

.....

“That really happened?”

“Yes, I wanted to read more of the memory, but... I can't anymore.”

After hearing Kiriell's account, Hansoo looked at the hammer.

‘...Brought it?’

—rumble—

—crackle—

Even after completely destroying the Ark-Roa, the hammer in his hands was still searching for things to smash apart.

Like its owner.

Hansoo frowned at the destructive energy running through the hand holding onto the hammer's handle.

‘I now understand why it's hard to handle.’

This hammer was always desiring to destroy.

No matter if the opponent was an enemy or its owner.

The moment it smashed apart the Ark-Roa, the energy heading towards the Ark-Roa flew towards Hansoo.

It ripped his muscles, burnt up his nerves, and broke his bones.

—crack!—

—kuduk!—

The destructive energy flowed through Hansoo's arm and into his body to rip apart his insides.

His body was going through an infinite loop; the Mjölnir was destroying him internally, and the Immortal Soul and Dragon Essence Blade regenerated any damage inflicted.

He understood why Tiamet had broken this apart.

Since Tiamet wouldn't have been able to hold onto this with his past level of strength.

And Kiriel carefully asked Hansoo:

“ ... Are you going to keep holding onto it?”

Though she was also at the 2 star level, due to her lack of regenerative and close combat skills, it was very taxing for her to hold it, even for a brief moment.

She'd end up a mess with just a single day of slowly being gnawed

away by it.

It would be okay in a fight, but for one to always carry it around...

“Can’t you carry it around in some container? Like a pouch...”

But Hansoo shook his head.

“No.”

This thing had a huge amount of pride.

When he’d released it, he felt the reaction of the hammer being much more powerful after holding onto it again.

It would not accept those that denied this energy as its owner.

And another thing...

‘This is going to be helpful for training.’

—pajijjik—

Hansoo mumbled as he felt the lightning energy burning up his insides.

Skill masteries improved the more one used it.

‘I guess the next seed on the list is the Immortal Soul.’

Between the Nine Dragons Spear and the Immortal Soul, he’d wondered which seed he would use to get to the 3 star level, but then decided on the latter.

He then shouted towards the two fighting in the distance.

—boom!—

“Hurry and finish! We should greet each other since we’ve been separated for so long!”

“Damn it! You bastard! Help us or something!”

Karhal gritted his teeth and roared out loud.

His expression was full of glee, though.

—roooaaar!—

The Ark-Roa's clone, the hunting dog, still remained and it was trying its best to resist being killed off by Karhal and Ekidu.

It was indeed trying its best, but it was not an opponent for the two after its original body had been destroyed.

—boom!—

Surrounded by her White River Demonic Art, Ekidu smashed the chest of the dog, and shouted at Hansoo.

“Just rest for a bit! We'll be right over!”

‘... It really has been a while. For her to use such words.’

Hansoo then put the hammer down, and sat on it.

—pachichiciciii!—

The Mjölnir retaliated as if to say that it wasn't a chair, but Hansoo ignored it and relaxed.

He was indeed tired.

‘Ugh... it hasn't even been a week since I woke up.’

But Hansoo chuckled.

Two years was a long time to rest.

And there was a long way for him to go.

At that moment—

—kiriririring—

—a healing aura entered Hansoo's body.

“Mmm...”

‘Right, what shall I do with this child...?’

One thing was clear: he didn't dislike this girl either.

As Hansoo smirked at Kiriel, who was healing him with a happy smile— —boom!—

“Ha! Hahaha! This bastard! It’s finally dead!”

At Karhal’s shout, the black dog fell down with a hole in its heart.

—SSSS—

The black dog trembled for a moment in rage as it looked around, but then collapsed.

It then turned into black powder, dispersing into the air.

SSSSS....

At that moment—

“...What is this?”

Ekidu, who had been standing in front of the black powder, asked out loud, causing Hansoo, Kiriel, and everyone else to look at where the Ark-Roa’s corpse had fallen.

Then they saw it.

A human-head-sized box amidst the black powder.

Along with a small letter.

Hansoo focused with his eyes, and looked at the word on the letter.

[GIFT].

‘So it only treats it as dead when the clone gets killed as well, huh?... But why didn’t it appear itself?’

Confused, Hansoo looked at the box that seemed to have been left behind by the fairy.

[a]Yes it's one eighth, but this is what the raws say xD

Chapter 336 : 5th area, Old Blue Zone (1)

‘Shall I open the letter first, or the box?’

Hansoo pondered for a moment, but decided to open the box first.

He was curious about its contents.

‘Anyway, you usually look at the product first, and then read the directions after.’

Hansoo mumbled to himself as he approached the box; Kiriel, Ekidu, and Karhal followed suit.

Hansoo asked the three:

“Are you hurt anywhere?”

“Ha, this is nothing, you know? As long as we win, we’ll heal.”

“I’m fine as well.”

The three replied with voices full of vigor.

And Hansoo stared at the three.

‘...It really has been a while.’

Two of them... two years.

One... a few decades.

He really couldn't think of what to say since it had been so long since he'd seen them.

Even though he had so much he wanted to say.

Karhal chuckled as he watched the hesitating Hansoo, and then spoke to him while pointing towards the box.

“Stop staring at me and just open the damn box first! I’m curious too. I’m feeling very greedy right now, you know?”

Hansoo smirked and nodded.

“Sure, since I’m the one who got hit the most and suffered the most, it makes sense for me to open it.”

“Dammit, do you not know that I suffered a lot, too? While you were asleep. Ugh.”

Karhal shuddered at the memories as Hansoo laughed at him.

Hansoo then approached the box that stood out from its surroundings; it was neatly tied by a ribbon.

He untied the ribbon and opened the lid.

pew

Something came out, with bright lights accompanying it.

Not one, but many.

‘...Four?’

Four boxes, all completely different in color and appearance.

And weirdly, the four items each had a name on them.

[For Hansoo-Gang]

‘...That’s some strange taste. They even misspelled my name. It’s K, not G.’

From the sloppy penmanship, he knew right then who had written these words.

Since there was only one type of person who kept trying their best to be kind to them in this damned world.

‘I don’t know why they didn’t meet us personally, but...’

Anyway, he realized why they’d divided it into four objects.

It depended on a person’s contributions.

But from what he knew, the reward for the Arc-Roa would be more than big enough for the four of them.

“There seems to be one for each of us. Let’s take a look.”

Kiriel and the other two walked up to their respective boxes and took out their contents.

“Oh, mine is a crystal? I guess I fought a bit harder than Ekidu.”

“Yes, mine seems to be a crystal too, but a bit smaller than Karhal’s.”

Ekidu and Karhal both received crystals.

The crystals were huge. It would have taken at least half a year for them to gather a similar amount if they hunted for it on their own.

‘Those... shouldn’t be able to get them to a 2 star, but it’ll be pretty close.’

Well, the Ark-Roa did devour countless transcendents.

After calculating the size of Karhal and Ekidu’s crystals, as well as their current level of strength, Hansoo then lifted his item.

His reward was a bit different from Kiriel’s.

‘Mine is... a Marble?’

A marble with countless forms within it.

It seemed to have been created by mixing countless different colors, and looked like a typical black bowling ball one could find in any bowling range.

However, it was only the size of a fist, and looked much, much more beautiful than a bowling ball.

On the other hand, Kiriel’s item looked like a claw from a beast.

Or maybe a tooth, or maybe a horn.

‘But it doesn’t seem to have any effects. Doesn’t look edible, either.’

At that moment, Hansoo saw the letter.

There seemed to be an explanation below their names.

<Arc-Roa's Metamorphosed Core - 1/4>

‘Mmm...this doesn't really explain it.’

He still wasn't sure what it meant.

Hansoo picked up the letter and opened it to read; he wanted to try and figure out what this Marble could be used for.

[Hahaha! I wonder if you're doing well! A pity I can't meet you in person. I can only write you a letter, instead.]

‘...’

Hansoo shook his head at the still-playful words of the fairy and continued to read.

And the question he had in his mind was answered for him.

[I'll explain why I cannot appear before you, but... let me say this first. Those so-called beings you guys call 'transcendents' are just people who sit between the Abyss and the seven-colored zones.]

He knew this.

It was the reason why the transcendents were many times stronger than ordinary people of the same zone.

The Seven Zone system was made to strengthen humans to the point where they could reach the level of the Abyss anyway.

The existence of the transcendents meant that the system created by the fairies to raise the people's strengths just wasn't enough anymore.

‘Even if we touch our ears, the system panel no longer comes up.’

Although the normal adventurers might still be under the system, if those people were the students preparing to enter the university called ‘Abyss’, then the transcendents were the graduates who were fully qualified.

And to become as strong as a transcendent, you needed to at least be as strong as a level one would be at the Violet Zone, because the

people of the Violet Zone would still be able to survive in the Abyss.

Of course, that was in comparison to the 1 star transcendents.

‘The Solo Numberings... they don’t have much meaning anymore. They’re still useful, though.’

Solo Numberings were nine items that were at their strongest when raised to the level of the Violet Zones.

Which meant that the items reached their limits at the Violet Zone.

Maybe the 1 star transcendents could still use them, but for a 2 star like him, they weren’t enough.

And truthfully, they’d already stopped using the artifacts left behind by the fairies when they were in the Abyss.

They’d used those artifacts to kill the fairies and rip apart the abyssal beasts, and then recreated a weapon from their corpses.

[Since we’re only the managers of the Seven Zones, it’s hard to pry into the affairs of transcendents since you guys are basically graduates. Still, don’t get too cocky. It doesn’t mean you’re stronger than us or anything. Heh.]

‘Childish.’

He knew this already.

The God’s messengers who controlled this world would not go down with just this measly strength.

[But then, we can’t really leave you guys alone, you babies of the transcendence... It’ll be a waste of time if we don’t help since this whole system was made to strengthen you guys, right?]

Hansoo nodded.

These words were correct.

The best artifacts and skills of the Seven Zones were those

categorized at the level of the Solo Numberings.

The very definition of Numbering meant being the most powerful of the Seven Zones.

All his Zero Numberings had been given to him directly by the fairy anyway.

No artifacts, only skills.

[You can use crystals to strengthen skills, and through fighting you can raise their mastery level, but artifacts are a bit different. It's possible for you to create one, but you don't have enough information at hand to do so.]

Hansoo nodded at these words.

A powerful beast like the Arc-Roa could be transformed into a weapon that even he could use.

Which is how he'd fought in the past as well.

But in order to do that, their alchemy, metallurgy, and their crafting abilities needed to be at a much higher level.

It wasn't like a game where a blacksmith could just hammer at some random materials, and then create a godly sword out of the blue.

It was much more realistic.

One needed to be at the same level as the Violet Zone at least.

Recycling the corpses of beasts to create artifacts that transcendents can use; only those who'd raised their mastery of all three skills to the level of the Violet Zone level. Only the people whose masteries of these three skills had been raised to the level of the Violet Zone, acquired countless knowledge and created an efficient method to handle such materials could create artifacts that transcendents could use by recycling the corpses of beasts.

'It'd be even better if I could acquire the <Plant> system I was going to get from the Violet Zone.'

[Of course, giving you crystals isn't very fair for you. You don't need them. You've already had the right to leave from the beginning.]

Hansoo already possessed the right to go over the wall without the crystals.

This meant that he was at an advantage compared to others, but at the same time, he was also losing out.

What was the point in killing beasts if he had no use for their crystals?

His skill masteries would rise, but there were no other rewards.

[So this is my act of benevolence to you. Since you've already leveled up, you'll need to gear up as well, right? I'll send you something every time you kill some useful fellows so keep that in mind. And try harder if you want to gain more skills. You'll receive another skill every time you manage to kill something by yourself.]

'...Is it like a material?'

If it was, then he could create a good artifact even if he didn't have the skills to do so.

Since the fairy had already taken care of the middle processes for him.

Hansoo smiled at this point.

'Not bad.'

He could just raise his masteries to get stronger, and then find other ways to get the three remaining skills.

The thing he'd been most worried about was the artifact, but now the fairies had solved the issue just like that.

This was a much better reward for him in comparison to a crystal.

'I've gained this, too.'

—rumble—

After taking a glance at the hammer in his hands, Hansoo read the last line of the letter.

[P.S. Having the Mjölnir is cheating... but,I'll let it go, since the others are also working hard.]

Hansoo destroyed the letter after reading those mysterious last words.

‘The others are also working hard... hmm.’

There were still questions left unanswered.

Like his missing ring.

But those questions would naturally be answered once he went up.

‘Finally, it’s time to go up.’

Hansoo mumbled towards the sky-high tower in the distance.

.....

One month later.

—rumble—

The giant elevator loudly opened its doors.

‘5th floor.’

Hansoo thought of the things he’d done in the past month as he stepped off the elevator.

Chapter 337 : 5th area, Old Blue Zone (3)

“You’re going to stay?”

Hansoo asked Ekidu before going up on the elevator.

Ekidu nodded.

“Somebody needs to stay behind and help. I need to find those Ains who’ve hidden themselves and get their blessings as well. Don’t activate this randomly, okay?”

Hansoo smiled bitterly as he looked at Ekidu, who had filled herself with the Pandemic Blade’s spores. But he soon nodded.

‘Time to go up. It’s really been a long time since I’ve gone up with somebody else next to me.’

Hansoo mumbled to himself as he looked at Kiriel next to him.

Kiriel was smiling with an extremely happy expression.

And Hansoo thought back to the past.

“...Will this really be fine?”

The mission that he had on this shoulders was too heavy and too difficult for him to trust with some random passersby and continue on his way.

The Abyssal Beasts weren’t pushovers and Clementine wouldn’t just stay idle.

No, the environment in each of the seven zones were an issue as well.

Though he had become much stronger, these guys weren’t something that powers like Tiamet, the Satellite Fortresses, or the Gragos could suppress.

They weren’t beasts prepared for the adventurers, but instead were closer to natural disasters.

And it was the same for the zones above.

So it was hard to trust anybody in a situation like this.

‘...But this still feels shitty as hell.’

Inserting the spores of the Pandemic Blade inside his friends and comrades was a really crappy job to do.

Even more so if they’d been with him for a long time.

But for her to willingly receive the spores to follow him...

Kiriel didn’t have a single hint of dissatisfaction on her face either, only glee.

“Whatever. It’s not like you’re going to make me do anything weird, right?”

“You never know.”

“Well, that’s for the future. I’ll be a lot of help to you anyway, right?”

“...”

Hansoo shook his head.

She was right.

In a world where anything could pop up from anywhere, the trait of Psychometry that could read the traces of the past was an extremely helpful ability.

Even more so in a situation like this.

Karhal and Ekidu chuckled at the two, and then pushed them into the elevator.

“Goodbye! If you ever meet that Sangjin... or your other friends. Send them my greetings.”

And as Hansoo nodded, the doors of the elevator closed.

—rumble—

The elevator, now filled up with crystals, started to rise up with Hansoo and Kiriel inside it.

.....

‘It’s impossible to guess what happened to the upper zones.’

Hansoo stretched his body as he prepared to battle.

He knew about the 5th zone, the Blue Zone of the past.

But he didn’t know how the 5th zone might have changed from all the fights between the transcendents.

Kiriel watched Hansoo, copying his movements and stretching her body as well.

“You’re preparing in case of an ambush, right?”

Hansoo nodded.

By now, they would know that the Ark-Roa had been killed and a soul fragment had been wasted.

If Clementine had already messed with the Blue Zone.

And if he was Clementine...

‘I would strike the moment we got off the elevator.’

As she continued to stretch and practice her various skills next to Hansoo, Kiriel asked in confusion: “If the opponent is so strong, then is there a need for us to go up right now? We can just train more, and...”

Though it would take longer to gain strength below, they could still become stronger before coming up.

But Hansoo shook his head.

‘There’s no time.’

There wasn’t much time left until the Abyss fully collapsed.

He’d been asleep for two years.

He’d been active for about a year before he fell asleep.

Which meant that in about six months or so, the barrier between the Abyss and the Otherverse was going to completely break apart.

He needed to get up to the Violet Zone and activate the <Noah>.

He needed to devour the whole 'Plant' within it and obtain a firmer footing towards the Abyss.

For him to hide in the lower floors when he barely had time to accomplish his goals?

What difference would there be between him and the cowards who ran the nursery?

The fairies had given him some minor goals.

Everytime he killed a substantial abyssal being, he would get a reward.

The Immortal Soul's mastery wouldn't rise by itself, either.

It would only increase as his body shredded apart and his soul felt in danger of destruction.

'All or nothing.'

Even if he avoided the fight, everything would end once the wall fell apart.

It might be after the abyss collapsed, from fighting the mobs of Clementine's underlings and the other powerful beings of the abyss.

Or he might die valiantly while fighting against Clementine's underlings on the way up.

Both outcomes would be failures in his books.

Which meant that there was only one answer left.

'...I will finish things up within these six months.'

Either he smashed apart all of Clementine's forces and placed them in the frontlines against the Abyss.

Or Clementine gets the last laugh.

Hansoo chuckled as he thought of Clementine in the past.

He couldn't imagine Clementine laughing, no matter what.

'We could never see through his thoughts.'

Other than his hatred for humankind, he was someone whose thoughts were unknown to all.

Hansoo thought to himself as he grasped his hammer tighter.

'Should I not have broken the limits?'

If he hadn't done so, then he would've been the only one with the right to become a transcendent in the entirety of the seven zones.

He wouldn't even have to care about Clementine's underlings then.

Since he could just smash them all apart with a finger.

He would also be able to obtain the legacy artifacts of the three upper zones with much more ease.

But he shook his head.

'He won't be letting things go that easy.'

Hansoo couldn't imagine Clementine saying something like <Ahhh! How could you become so strong!>.

Even if he didn't break the limits.

Clementine would've done something.

Even if it destroyed the entire Otherverse, Clementine would stop him.

And what use would that be?

He would need to face the Abyss alone at that point.

'We will see. As to how you've prepared.'

—chiiijjiik!—

As he looked towards the elevator's door with the hammer in his hand.

—gggggggkkkkng—

The giant elevator made huge noises as it slowed down.

Meaning it had arrived at the 5th zone, the Blue zone.

—rumble—

The white inner walls of the elevator opened up.

But at that moment—

—swoooooosh!—

“Huh!?”

Kiriell was shocked at the sudden loss of air.

‘What the... it’s a vacuum?’

It felt like the windows of an airplane had popped off.

And not only that—

—whoosh!—

An intense wave of heat smashed against them.

Kiriell frowned at this horrific environment.

No matter how strong she had become, she was still a human.

Though she wouldn’t die immediately from a vacuum, if this situation continued for a long time then her ability to fight would naturally decrease.

‘I didn’t learn any survival-related skills, damn. What the hell happened to the 5th zone?’

Since she had come after everything had settled, she didn’t know what the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th zones had been like, but she still knew that they hadn’t been this harsh.

But as Kiriell was still reeling from this current situation.

—oommmm!—

A translucent aura came out from Hansoo’s body and surrounded

both of their bodies.

“Haa.”

The surrounding air became much more bearable.

The intense heat died down as the oxygen was compressed around their bodies.

And Kiriell looked at Hansoo in shock as she felt the strong amount of life aura within the colorless aura.

‘This is the Spirit, huh?’

An ability she had not received because the people before her had caused a ruckus.

‘He protected me. Heheh.’

Kiriell stared at Hansoo with a smile, but then quickly woke up from her stupor.

This wasn’t the right time for such a thing.

—boom!—

A red light exploded out from Kiriell’s body.

A detection type skill mixed in with her trait.

Though she wouldn’t be able to read too deeply like this, she could still read a large area around her.

It was the best method for finding ambushes or traps.

...SSSSS...

But Kiriell shook her head as she scanned the area.

‘There’s nothing.’

There were no ambushes set up.

Hansoo took a glance at Kiriell’s shocked expression, and then turned around.

Towards the distant sky.

And Kiriel freaked out even more as she looked at the sky.

‘...What is this place?’

Kiriel frowned as she walked out from the elevator, looking intently at the sky.

A completely dark sky.

‘...Night?’

No.

This wasn’t nighttime.

At this moment, Hansoo spoke out.

“...The protective barrier broke.”

A translucent blue barrier was covering the entire sky as if it were trying to defend against the darkness.

The issue was that this blue barrier was not complete.

The blue barrier that had been made from tens of thousands of giant hexagonal shapes had hundreds of its hexagons broken or missing.

And through those holes, the air was continuously being sucked out.

And in the process, also brought in heat.

Kiriel realized the situation as she looked at the giant barrier and the scene below.

‘...What is this place? Is it like a moon? No, it’s not a moon. Is it a space station?’

Kiriel mumbled to herself as she looked around.

The entire floor was made of artificial materials like steel, so it couldn’t be a moon.

But there was only a broken-down city above that ground.

The metal shelters were melting down from the heat, seeping in

through the holes in the barrier.

‘...This is a place where humans live? Damn, was this the original difficulty of the Blue Zone?’

As Kiriel mumbled at the extremely artificial-looking world that didn’t have a single trace of a human, Hansoo was also lost in thought.

‘That's not breakable...?’

That would be too much, even for Clementine.

Even though Clementine was a handful, the original rulers should be in this zone.

The owners of the Yellow Zone were the Sages, followed by the Higher Races. And the owner of the Green Zone was Tiamet.

Then there was also the owner of the 5th zone.

The Machine King.

That was what his friends had called him in the past.

Melchizedek.

‘I guess I’ll need to figure out why that thing broke.’

Hansoo mumbled as he glanced at the giant space colony that should’ve been under the control of Melchizedek as Kiriel curiously swept through the area.

Chapter 339 : Main Research Center (1)

“Can you read anything?”

Hansoo asked Kiriel, who continued to stay focused with her hand on the ground.

“Please, wait a moment!”

She hadn’t been able to read anything with her area skill.

Which meant that nothing had happened recently, at least.

—SSSSSSS—

As the range decreased and the effectiveness multiplied, she was able to delve deeper and read even more memories.

Kiriel started off from the most recent event near the elevator and started to read through them.

Soon—

‘...What is this?’

Kiriel started to frown.

<Damn it! Run!>

<Bastards! You attack us from behind after forming an alliance!?

> <Please! Please don’t leave me behind, please!”

Countless strange attacks were flying around the elevator and turning the whole place into a mess.

—crunch!—

—crack!—

‘Huh...What?’

Because the attackers hadn’t reached the land she was reading, she couldn’t figure out their identities.

She could only see the countless adventurers being killed off like flies from those strange attacks.

But soon she realized that she didn't really need to read the memories of other areas.

—boom! boom!—

She could feel the vibrations of the ground getting stronger.

Which meant that something was coming.

Something was coming to crush those adventurers that were running away.

But as Kiriell continued to read the memory.

—whoooosh!—

Someone was pulling strongly on the back of her clothes.

“Ahh!”

Because of the external stimulus, her Psychometry was shattered and she was forced back out into reality.

‘Damn... I almost saw it! So close!’

But as she turned around—

—boooooooooom!—

The ground exploded right where she'd been standing.

‘Huh?!’

Kiriell frowned at the beam attack that was exactly the same as the one she'd seen in the memories.

Indeed, her guard had been down because she'd been using her Psychometry.

She wouldn't die from it, but it was clear that an attack of this level would hurt her to some degree.

But as Kiriell quickly activated her skills to defend against the fragments and the flames that came from the explosion, somebody was already standing before her.

—titititing!—

Hansoo had pulled Kiriel behind him and deflected most of the damage with the hammer.

—rumble—

‘This is the Spirit, huh? How useful.’

Kiriel looked at Hansoo absorbing the residual flames into his body, but then turned to the thing that had attacked her in the first place.

‘A robot?’

Eeeeeeing.

—kacha—

She’d thought it would be an abyssal beast or an underling of Clementine.

But the thing that was actually coming towards her was a robot.

—rumble—

It looked like a construction machine all clad in some metal alloy.

The laser beam weapon that had attacked her was attached on top of it, alongside a cannon.

Overall, it looked very similar to a tank.

—rummble—

Though the 10-meter-tall giant machine approaching her looked quite threatening, her expression remained indifferent.

‘How boring’.

Kiriel cracked her knuckles and surrounded herself in flames as she mumbled.

The 5th Zone.

A giant metal city, and the giant barrier that surrounded it.

The extremely advanced technology.

She expected everything within this place to fit the look of its surroundings.

But what the hell was this?

‘It just looks very generic. Even the Akadus of the 2nd zone looked more advanced than this.’

Kiriell sighed as she thought of the silver androids controlled by Gwanje, the lord of the 2nd Zone.

—kiiiiiiing—

Energy started to gather at the giant cannon on top of the machine.

—boooooom!—

It fired towards the humans that still hadn’t run away even after seeing it.

The energy was so violent that the attack had melted down the surrounding land, destroying the debris.

‘Wow, that’s a bit strong.’

Though it looked lame, its might was dimensions apart from the Akadus.

But Kiriell only shrugged her shoulders as she took something out from her pocket.

—whooooosh!—

Kiriell used the object to quickly draw lines in the air.

And as the beam smashed against the space Kiriell had just been drawing on.

—claaangg!—

The laser split into two halves and flew past her, exploding in the space behind her.

—boom!—

Kiriell used the force of the explosion to accelerate her charge forwards and drew a vertical line.

And as the object in Kiriell's hand cut through the air—

—clank!—

—the huge metal robot split in half, its two parts falling down.

—kirurururuk!—

The tank struggled and made strange noises as it attempted to turn its cannon to attack again, but it was futile.

Deep within its metal walls, the tank's core had been split apart as well.

And with a final groan, the tank soon stopped moving.

Kiriell checked the insides to see if anybody was riding it, but it was empty.

'A robot is indeed a robot. But damn, this is a really good one.'

Kiriell looked at the object in her hand in shock.

[Ark-Roa's Fang].

It was only the Ark-Roa's fang in name, but its might was actually countless times stronger than the fangs of an Ark-Roa itself.

It was capable of splitting the air apart and deflected light.

Unlike its noble appearance, which resembled an ivory tusk, the might hidden within it was no joke.

'That fairy was one hell of a nuisance in the tutorial, but at least they're properly giving out rewards, huh?'

Kiriell rubbed the fang's soft curves as she looked towards Hansoo.

'He fought even harder than me, so he should have received a better reward than mine, but he only got part of an artifact.'

Kiriel tried to imagine what it would look like once it was completed, and then spoke to Hansoo.

“Looks like this is all there is to it. I think these are the ones that roam around this area.’

These things were more than strong enough to threaten normal adventurers, but they were a bit lacking when it came to transcendents like herself.

‘Reading this thing’s memories should help out at least.’

Maybe she’d find a clue as to why that barrier had broken apart.

—kiiiing—

“Ugh.”

Kiriel’s expression turned unsightly as she read the memory.

And Hansoo chuckled while watching her.

“If it’s a common weapon then it’ll only be useful once it’s mass-produced.”

“Ah...”

—rumble!—

—clank! clank!—

Even before Kiriel could freak out at the hundreds of machines she had seen in the memories, those exact machines had already gathered around them.

—kiiiiing!—

Zzzzmmmm!

The Melchizedek’s machines had gathered after receiving the distress signal of the machine that Kiriel had just destroyed.

And the first thing they did was gather energy to attack the two of them.

‘Let’s see.’

—boooooooooom!—

As Hansoo smashed the Mjolnir into the ground, a giant bolt of lightning smashed down from the sky, creating a pillar of lightning.

—rummble!—

Hansoo started to think about his next step as he swept apart the attacks of the countless machines with the lightning pillar.

No matter what happened here, he just needed to accomplish his job.

‘I need to sweep away Melchizedek.’

He always had to remember his job.

His goal was to win.

And the first requirement to achieve his goal was... annihilation of all obstacles that could deter his path towards that victory.

The strength in his hands was all for this goal.

The machine king, driven by his greed for material objects and information, wouldn't be an exception to this as well.

He wanted to avoid it if possible, but he had been attacked the second he encountered his underlings.

And this would not end until he smashed apart Melchizedek's main body located somewhere within the 5th zone.

‘Where... where could he be?’

Hansoo looked around in various directions and mumbled.

‘It doesn't seem like it would be on the 1st floor.’

The chances of Melchizedek being on the 1st floor were very low.

But these soldiers were reacting way too violently.

There were way more of them than usual as well.

Of course, it wouldn't be weird for it to be in the first floor.

Despite being a machine, Melchizedek was a curious being that pretended to be a human as it roamed around the entire zone.

And if it was on the 1st floor, there was only one place it would go to.

‘The Main Research Center.’

...SSSSSS...

Hansoo mumbled, and with a sweep of his Pandemic Blade, he melted over twenty of the robots.

He realized something after looking around.

In this giant metal city that was divided into various sectors with different facilities and functions, this place was where the Main Research Center was located.

Of course, this was something the humans had named it, but the name was very fitting.

‘If he’s here, then... jackpot.’

It would be even better if Melchizedek didn’t bring his elite soldiers with it, but just being near his current location was good enough.

Since it would be much better than if it hid behind its <Castle>.

‘If I can find him while I’m cleaning up these pieces of garbage, then... that really is a jackpot.’

As he focused, Hansoo thought of Melchizedek, who reminded him of an innocent child.

Then—

—chiiijijijiikk!—

A dark aura started to gather around the tip of Mjolnir.

The Nine Dragons Spear.

Of course, the name was because the creator of this skill was

somebody who wielded a spear.

The important thing wasn't the name, but how the skill itself worked.

A skill which squeezed every drop of strength in its user's body, including the user's instinctive struggle for survival during its use, and then turned that strength into a destructive form of energy that smashed apart the user's foe.

Every time another dragon was added, the pain one felt throughout their body was multiplied.

A skill which stacked the energy that was extracted out from the body through this process and used it to destroy one's foes.

This was the Nine Dragons Spear.

Which meant that as long as one understood the method behind the extraction of strength, and how the energy was gathered, it didn't matter what weapon was used.

—kwaaadddk!—

—swooosh!—

Four dragons rushed out from Hansoo's heart and started to intermingle with the lightning within the Mjolnir.

It wasn't that four was his limit.

But rather that four was more than enough.

Hansoo lifted the hammer surrounded by black lightning and smashed it into the ground.

And the moment the hammer collided with the metallic land— —
boooooom!—

—the black lightning rode through the ground and started to spread out.

Like countless dragons charging towards their enemies.

—zzzzzzttt—

—boom!—

The streaks of black lightning swam through the land and smashed into the robots, blowing them up and melting them down.

It was like watching countless dragons chewing apart their prey.

—rumble!—

—boom!—

‘Woah...’

Kiriel split apart the robots one by one, dazedly looked at this scene where hundreds of robots were destroyed in an instant.

But there were another set of eyes that were watching this scene as well.

.....

“What the hell is that?”

—rumble—

17 kilometers away from the elevator.

A man, who was lying between the buildings and watching the elevator, freaked out at the scene where hundreds of AR-1121s were being destroyed.

Though they were mass produced, those things weren’t so weak that they could be destroyed that easily.

Another man, who had been standing next to him, asked with a stern expression: “Do you think he came down from above? Or came up from below?”

“How would I know?”

After hearing the annoyed voice of the man who was on the ground, the man with the stern expression frowned.

“You mean we’ll have to meet them to find out. Are you going to

make contact?’

“Hmm...”

That man was too strong for them to just ignore and continue on with what they’d been doing.

The man on the ground, who seemed to be the leader, frowned at the words of his underling.

Chapter 340 : Main Research Center (2)

—kiiiiing!—

After seeing their comrades being destroyed, countless more unmanned robots rushed to this location and started to search.

—kirruk—

Their goal was to collect intel regarding their mysterious opponent.

They were coded to collect intel throughout the entire research center, but once attacked, they would gather in order to destroy or capture their foe.

Though the sensors above the modules were working at full power to find the two intruders, it was all futile.

After inspecting its destroyed comrade, the AR-1121 picked it up and started to move away—it assumed the intruder had fled to another location.

It would be able to gather a bit of intel after it looked through the debris.

And right next to them...

There were two pairs of eyes that were watching these robots returning to their original positions.

‘This is much better.’

Hansoo nodded as he looked at the thin barrier surrounding him and Kiriel.

And Kiriel smiled proudly.

“It’s something the mages of the Kingdoms were using, but it seemed useful, so I learned it. I was able to hide from the Ark-Roa, and even from the one who created the various Transcendents.”

Hansoo’s brows rose up.

He had always wondered how she'd roamed around without being detected by the others, but it looked like this was how she had done it.

‘It still shouldn't have been that easy.’

Her methods were indeed above the norm, and her talents were naturally not inferior to the Keldian in the past.

“Anyway, where do we go now?”

Kiriell asked Hansoo, looking around the vast, artificial land.

‘It's too wide.’

If she were to read everything with her Psychometry, she would burn out very quickly.

She didn't know what she had to look for as well.

‘Right... Do I have to tell her?’

Hansoo thought to himself.

If they were going to continue traveling, there was a need for him to tell her that he had come from the future.

Otherwise, she would question him every time he did something strange.

It might even cause confusion during a decisive moment.

Since Kiriell wouldn't understand why he was doing certain things.

But even before Hansoo could finish his thoughts, Kiriell asked him a question, with eyes full of expectation.

“Hurry and show me. I heard you have a weird superpower right?”

“...”

‘Did she see that too?’

He had heard that she'd researched him, but it looked like she'd

also seen the lies he'd made in the past.

Hansoo chuckled at Kiriel's puppy-like eyes and pointed towards a direction.

"Let's go that way then."

And Kiriel smiled at Hansoo's actions.

This world was a new, unknown world.

Nobody knew where they were, and they didn't know what they would encounter or where they had to go.

But a trait that showed them the path in a situation like this?

Wasn't that the best trait in a leader one could ask for?

And his goal was cool too.

Saving all of mankind.

'I'm going to follow him until the end!'

Kiriel tightly grasped the fang in her hand as she quickly followed Hansoo from behind.

.....

"It seems everything was destroyed."

'Who lived here in the past?'

Kiriel mumbled as she ran past countless metal buildings.

It was strange.

Robots wouldn't live in such places.

And the half-destroyed barrier in the sky had also proved something.

There was something that needed that exact barrier.

But strangely, there wasn't a single trace of a human being in this vast land.

Only the metal robots that roamed from place to place while

making strange noises.

‘Ugh.’

Kiriel looked around at the tank-like robots, who all seemed to be running around in a hectic state because of their intrusion.

—sssssk!—

‘What the hell?’

Kiriel frowned at the minute and invisible wave that made contact with her own barrier.

This was a detection skill.

Quite a high-leveled one too.

‘No, it’s not just a skill. What is this?’

One thing was clear at least; they had been found.

—swoosh—

A man appeared from where the wave had originated from in the distance.

Right where they were heading towards.

And the man was holding onto a strange rod-like object in his hands.

—chiiijijik—

‘That. He mixed his skill with that.’

She wondered how he’d detected her through her barrier, but he’d apparently mixed his skill with a strange object.

The man wore a necklace, which suddenly created a strange, translucent bubble that surrounded his head.

Something that allowed him to maintain his fighting abilities in a land that had no oxygen to breathe.

Kiriel started to get curious as she watched the man. He seemed to be clad in various items that looked different from normal

artifacts.

‘...Were you always able to mix skills with technology?’

That thing looked extremely useful.

Though the skills looked magical, they were a lot of cases where they fell short.

Most of them were very inefficient if they couldn’t be used in direct combat or for survival.

And as if feeling Kiriell’s eyes on him, the man shouted out towards Kiriell and Hansoo.

“Wait! Please wait a moment!”

Kiriell stopped after hearing the man’s shout, and asked Hansoo: “What shall we do?”

She was interested in the man already, but the man had come to find them instead.

And the man was in quite a perilous situation as well.

—Krrrrrk!—

“Damn it!”

The surrounding robots had heard the man’s shouts and were gathering towards this area.

Apparently, he had come outside even after knowing that it would be dangerous.

Hansoo pondered for a moment at Kiriell’s words, but then nodded.

“Let’s hear him out at least.”

The scene from the memory Kiriell had told him about kept on bugging him.

And he also wondered why the giant barrier in the sky had broken apart.

Intel was better the more one had, and somebody who'd been here longer would definitely know more than they did.

Kiriel chuckled as she nodded.

“It looks like we'll need to rescue him first.”

The man was screaming while he fought the robots in the distance.

“Ahhh!”

—boom!—

She and Hansoo couldn't be seen by the robots since they were behind her barrier that hid them.

So all their attention and attacks had been focused on the man.

Hansoo nodded at Kiriel's words as he watched the man who was barely dodging the various attacks that flew towards him.

“I'll do it.”

Then—

—sssss—

—a mass of red clouds started to appear around Hansoo's body.

.....

“Haa... haaa. Thank you.”

The man gasped for breath after reaching the barrier Kiriel had set up.

Kiriel mumbled to herself as she looked at the man's appearance.

‘Woah. What a hottie!’

His looks were comparable to some famous superstar.

But Kiriel moved her eyes away from his face.

The various machinery the man had on his body was more interesting to her than his face.

‘What are all these things?’

She wasn’t an engineer to begin with, so she couldn’t figure out with a single glance how he used his machinery nor how they were created.

But there was no need for her to know all those details.

She just needed to know how to use them, and what effect they had.

And her trait was perfect for such a thing.

‘Let’s see.’

—kiiiiing—

As Kiriel activated her Psychometry to read the memories— — Hansoo spoke to the man, who was still gasping for breath.

“Why did you call out to us?”

The man looked into Hansoo’s eyes and said: “What else? I was asking for help.”

Kiriel clenched her teeth as she used a touch of her Psychometry.

She had expected this to some degree.

Since she and Hansoo had shown off their prowess already, anyone who came to find them would be coming for that exact reason.

But what gall.

‘Is he not scared?’

Those looks might be able to subdue the rage of some females, but it wouldn’t be that useful against another man.

But Hansoo looked at the man in amusement.

He could see the man had something backing his arrogance.

And the man saw Hansoo’s gaze and nodded.

“Good. We should all be helping each other out. I’m sure you

won't lose out on this deal."

"Do you even know who we are?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, I don't know who you are, but you are human. Since that crazy bastard Melchizedek betrayed the humans, we should be helping each other out."

"Betray?"

Kiriel was shocked.

Betrayal?

Had they been allies in the past?

The man looked at Kiriel in shock.

'What a pretty girl.'

The man, Jack Hounder, smiled and replied kindly.

"Yes, betray. That bastard suggested we ally and then betrayed us the moment we agreed."

Jack looked in the direction of the research center in the distance.

.....

Outer areas of the giant machine city.

—rumble—

A train-like object was quickly scouting through the perimeter of the city.

But it didn't seem like a train for transferring people or cargo.

The giant train racing through the metal ground was simply humongous.

—rumble—

The giant train charging over the ground was easily the size of a

small island.

And there were hundreds of buildings that had been built on top of that train.

And in the middle of this train...

Within a giant building...

—rummble—

A two-meter-tall humanoid form was standing in the middle of a structure, which resembled a factory or research center.

The man, who had been standing amidst the countless noisy machines, ignored the faint vibrations in the ground as he looked around.

Though the various machines looked quite disorganized— —the view from the man's position was quite a sight.

To the left, there were thousands of test tubes which held countless humans.

To the right of the man, there were factories that were quickly constructing things.

—bubble bubble—

The humans who looked to be sleeping peacefully were mostly in parts.

Just the bottom half, the top half or just the arms and legs.

The other parts had already melted down into the liquid.

And these liquified bodies were being sucked into a larger tube that was attached on top of the test tubes.

—sssss—

The man, who had been staring at the factory, turned towards the liquids.

Towards the direction where those liquids were heading to.

The man looked at the giant aquarium located in front of him.

The lifeform that was being created in the middle.

The lifeform that was receiving the liquefied humans from the left, and nanomachines from the plant on the right.

The man caressed the aquarium as he mumbled.

‘A step towards... unification.’

But this was not enough.

He needed more.

As fast as possible.

As much as possible.

The man then turned towards the elevator and smiled.

Chapter 341 : Main Research Center (3)

—rumble—

“You live hidden down there?”

Jack nodded at Kiriel who had been pointing towards the ruins in the distance.

“We have about two hundred people managing the barrier to keep us hidden. It doesn’t look like those robots know how to use skills proficiently yet.”

Well, they were borrowing the powers of the strange artifacts they had dug up from this place because their own skills weren’t enough.

Like the personal equipment that had helped him find these two just now.

‘This is already good enough.’

Jack looked at the two people in front of him.

If they could borrow their strength, who were both definitely transcendents, their situation would become much better.

‘She doesn’t really leave his side though.’

Jack made a dissatisfied expression as he looked at Kiriel.

He hadn’t seen a woman in so long.

Plus she was such a beauty, but she was always on her guard against him.

‘What’s the point of being handsome anymore...’

He knew he was good-looking, and he had lived a decent life up to this point.

Until he reached the Blue Zone.

Until Melchizedek betrayed them.

It was mostly useless now.

Since he couldn't attract any males with his looks.^{[a][b]}

Kiriel threw a question at Jack, who'd been looking her up and down.

“What happened? What about the alliance?”

With a sad expression, Jack shrugged his shoulders and said: “This is what happens when you don't have the strength. I'll continue after we arrive. We're almost there.”

Jack then started to speed up.

And Kiriel's curiosity only increased.

She was actually the type that could not hold back her curiosity very well.

The reason why she had searched around for information on Hansoo was because of her curiosity as well.

‘Whatever, I can just figure it out on my own.’

But as Kiriel lifted her hands up to use her Psychometry.

Jack raised both his hands and spoke out.

“Woah, woah. Please don't do that thing you did before. It feels a bit icky, so... We're almost here anyway.”

‘Oops.’

Kiriel made an embarrassed expression.

Jack then jumped towards a specific location within the ruins.

Then—

Several machines that were hidden within the ruins activated, and a blue light scanned all three of their bodies.

—didididik!—

But the moment the blue light scanned through Hansoo and

Kiriell, it turned red and made warning noises. Something vibrated beneath them.

‘The hell is this?’

Kiriell frowned and looked at Hansoo to see what they should do.

“Ah, these things are sensitive. Please relax.”

Jack lifted his palms again to calm them down, and then put in a few commands which caused the red light to turn back to blue.

Soon—

—rumble—

—a ten-meter-tall mechanical spider rose up from the ruins.

[MR-4112]

‘Ah, this is what vibrated under us just now, huh?’

—chiiiiik—

Kiriell mumbled as she looked at the giant machine spider, and as soon as it finished rising it then opened up its stomach for them to enter.

There seemed to be weapons in the machine’s eight legs, and it was clear what this thing would’ve done if the light had remained red.

“It’s a very rare thing you see. We were barely able to hack it so you guys won’t be able to break this. Come on, let’s get on.”

—rummble—

The spider, after taking in the three of them, started to dig through the metal debris and into the ground.

It soon disappeared without a trace as it headed deeper and deeper underground.

.....

—rummble—

The spider shot beams from its legs to melt down the path, and it only stopped after it melted down a thirteen-meter-tall metal wall to make an entrance.

—rummble—

The stomach of the mechanical spider opened up, and light entered the space the trio were in.

And Kiriel was shocked at the scene that unfolded before her eyes.

‘It’s quite well-decorated.’

The giant shelter clearly showed traces of humans having lived here.

The giant shelter, which was the size of a few sports fields combined, had countless tunnels for things to enter and leave through.

Some strange machines were digging out materials as they entered and left through these passages as well.

‘...What is that? Dirt? Ore?’

Kiriel grew curious as she looked at the construction machines moving in strange materials from the tunnels.

Of course, it wouldn’t be weird if they were ore or dirt.

Since this place wasn’t really a satellite, but rather a structure built on top of a moon from what she could see.

But the important thing was why they were digging holes at a time like this.

‘What the hell are they doing?’

But as Kiriel was lost in confusion—

—a small group of people quickly walked towards Hansoo and Kiriel.

Twenty or so people who were also clad in strange artifacts like

Jack.

Once the group arrived in front of them, a large, blonde man standing in the front extended his hand and greeted them.

“Greetings. I am called Samuel.”

‘He seems to be the leader of their group.’

Kiriel mumbled to herself.

He hadn’t really said he was the leader, but it was clear after looking at the surrounding people.

That he was the leader of this place.

‘Well, he might not be as well.’

Samuel continued to speak to Kiriel and Hansoo.

“Thank you for accepting our invitation.”

Samuel’s attitude was full of caution.

He had to be, since he was dealing with transcendents.

Monsters who had broken past the limits of humankind.

‘If they could just help us out a bit...’

It was too late to say these words.

Hansoo spoke coldly to Samuel who had been looking at him with a perplexed gaze.

“Let’s get to the main point—it doesn’t look like we have a lot of time.”

Samuel nodded.

“I’ve asked you guys to come here to make an alliance. You won’t lose out, I promise.”

Hansoo continued to speak.

“First, tell me your objective.”

Kiriel nodded.

She and Hansoo had come here because of their curiosity, but these people's stories were different.

For them to suggest an alliance like this, despite knowing how strong she and Hansoo were?

What if they were insane like Zeus, and were thinking about turning all these people into slaves? Would they have dared to invite them here?

Samuel smiled.

“Is your goal the research center?”

“...”

Hansoo replied with silence.

‘It seems they’ve been watching us longer than we expected.’

Even transcents couldn't watch over someone from dozens of kilometers away.

Which meant that they deduced that his goal was the research center from the direction he had taken.

Samuel checked that his thoughts were correct from Hansoo's expression, and then confidently continued.

“And you guys should have come down from above, since that's the only way for you guys to know the location.”

“Eh...”

‘Not really.’

Kiriel made a strange expression.

This Samuel guy was acting as if he knew everything, but it didn't seem like that was the case.

‘Well, with a strange trait like that... it's easy to misunderstand.’

Kiriel mumbled as she thought of Hansoo's trait.

They'd been running towards their objective without a break.

A very important-sounding location.

Nobody would suspect that they'd come from below like this.

Since it was impossible for someone to go straight towards their objective if they didn't even know where they were heading to.

'So the place we were heading to is called the research center, huh?'

She hadn't actually known the location since she was just following Hansoo's trait.

Kiriell pondered for a moment and decided just to stay quiet.

A misunderstanding had its uses.

But unlike Kiriell's thoughts, Hansoo just replied bluntly: "You're wrong. We came from below."

"...What? Aren't you here to reclaim the research center after failing to do it last time?'

But as Hansoo shook his head, Samuel's expression turned into one of confusion.

'No way. How did they know how to get to the research center after coming from below...'

The Main Research Center was continuously in motion.

If one didn't know its path, then it would be impossible to find it.

Even if they were to pick up hints left behind another, it wouldn't be possible to do such a thing.

As Samuel was lost in confusion, Hansoo continued to speak.

"But you're half correct."

"Huh?"

"I've never failed in reclaiming the research center, but I have indeed come for it this time."

"Uhh..."

Samuel's confusion grew.

To come up from below to attack the research center?

How did he know about this?

It was too unbelievable to be a lie.

‘What's his objective...?’

For them to have come from below.

Then the story had changed a little.

But Hansoo chuckled at Samuel's perplexed expression.

“We don't really care much anyway. We can just leave if we want to. So show us what you're hiding, because I don't believe this is all you have to ask for an alliance.”

Hansoo looked around.

About a thousand people were scattered around this place.

Though it was a large force, it was nowhere near enough people to attack the research center.

But they hadn't pleaded for help, but had asked for an alliance instead.

Which meant that had something to back themselves up.

‘If they don't have anything that is worth our time, then... there's no need to form an alliance.’

Their objective also seemed to be the research center.

He didn't know why they wanted to take over that place, but if they had no cards to deal with, it was better for him to move as a duo with Kiriel for efficiency's sake.

After a short pause, Samuel nodded.

‘Yeah, our objectives are the same...’

Letting the two of them in without a detailed investigation had been a mistake.

But this could also give them a chance.

“This way. Jack, lead them well.”

Samuel then walked away towards a tunnel. Hansoo and Kiriel shrugged at each other and followed suit.

.....

—rumble—

‘Are there no females here?’

Everyone they had seen on the way were men.

[Sec-141]

As Kiriel was walking through the tunnels where the construction robots were digging things up, Samuel spoke up from the front. It was as if he was trying to make some small talk to get rid of the silence.

“Do you know what this facility was made for?”

“This shelter, you mean?”

Samuel shook his head.

“This giant base in general. The 5th zone, the Blue zone of the past. This entire moon is the 5th zone.”

‘It was a moon base, huh?’

But of course, she couldn’t figure out why this base had been made.

Samuel smiled, then continued to speak.

“This giant moon base was said to have been built in order to research <something> sleeping beneath this place. It was all for that purpose.”

Samuel mumbled as he thought of the giant base of the moon <Nelkipa>.

*In Korean, the term 위성, (Pronounced Wee-Sung) can both

mean a satellite and a moon (Or anything that really floats around a planet). The author seems to use them interchangeably, so I had to infer from the surrounding context.

It seems to me that this giant body of mass in space is not a moon, but some form of asteroid. But since the author described it as the size of a moon (I assume it is the earth's moon), I'll just translate it as the moon.

P.S. information may get changed with future context.

[a]Or can he? ;)

[b]hey. dont raise my hopes.

Chapter 342 : Refinement (1)

[Analyzing...complete]

The research center.

The giant central intelligence let out a line of words after researching the debris of the robots that had been destroyed by Hansoo's attacks.

The intelligence, which had been gently stroking the broken robot parts like a mother would do to a child, started to compile a list of results from the research.

—kiririririk—

The traces of strength left behind on the remains of its creations.

There was always a unique aura behind every attack.

And this differed from the user's strength, traits, and personality.

If one could find that aura, then it was just a matter of time before they found the owner.

The central intelligence started to send out commands to every single one of its underlings.

Then—

—kiriririk—

The scanning modules of the robots closest to the intelligence started to change.

And they were now programmed to search and identify that brand new and alluring aura that had destroyed its comrades.

.....

Samuel smiled as he continued to guide Hansoo and Kiriel.

“This place we're living in was also used to research the base as

well.”

The previous inhabitants had all disappeared for some reason.

The only robots still in operation were those that had been ordered to dig.

And the people who had run away after Melchizedek’s betrayal had found a ray of hope in this exact location.

A ray of hope telling them that they might be able to beat those metal cans.

But the most important thing right now was rescuing the females that had been captured and taken to the research center.

‘This is turning me insane.’

Samuel mumbled.

Believe it or not, the lack of women in this already hell-like place made it even worse.

He’d been thankful in the past when Melchizedek had ignored them and targeted only the females, but now he deeply regretted not saving those females after spending so many days with just men.

Gulp.

Samuel was embarrassed that Kiriel kept smirking at him; he’d been staring at her beauty, which had rarely been seen even in the shelter in the past.

It had been so long since he had seen a woman, he had subconsciously gulped at the sight of her.

‘Well... at least they don’t seem like the violent type.’

Samuel sighed in relief when Kiriel started ignoring him as if she was used to it.

If these guys were the violent type, then there was a high chance that his head would have flown off already.

‘Well, if they were like that, then I wouldn’t even have made contact with them in the first place.’

Jack had a trait that could read a person's emotions and their evil thoughts, and since he’d already checked them out, it was all good.

It had been a dangerous mission, but he’d succeeded.

The duo looked quite safe from afar, and he’d felt a sense of urgency.

With the combination of his good looks and his trait, he had bewitched countless women in the past.

And after seeing such a beauty, he could barely hold himself in check.

“So, what’s actually below this place?”

Kiriell asked curiously, looking back and forth between Jack and Samuel.

She didn’t care that Samuel had stopped talking to think, but she was still curious.

And Samuel merely replied with a blank expression.

“We don’t know, but... it should be amazing.”

‘...You don’t know?’

Samuel blushed again as Kiriell’s brows rose up, and he quickly tried to explain. He didn’t want to embarrass himself in front of such a beauty.

“Of course. Since such an advanced civilization was working this hard to dig it out, shouldn’t it be amazing?”

He wasn't basing his confidence just on this assumption.

The original inhabitants of this so-called ‘excavation center’ had actually left behind a record.

A record stating that if one can excavate the hidden weapon below this base, <Nelkipa>, then they would have a chance to save

their actual planet.

‘Yeah.’

Samuel smiled confidently.

He didn’t know why these two were heading towards the research center, but only an insane maniac would approach that place because it had the tightest defenses of any structure in this entire floor.

Which meant that they had a specific goal to achieve.

The other transcents had acted like that as well.

Transcents could not be born without desire.

Samuel knew that these people would help them out.

‘You guys need slaves as well, so we will gladly fill that role.’

He’d never even dreamed of being able to control these two.

Their levels of strength were dimensions apart.

He only wished for one thing.

And that was for these guys to take them in.

He could guarantee that their group was quite useful.

Since strength wasn’t the only thing that one needed to survive in this world.

So he had called out to these two.

To give them what they’d been searching for and gaining protection in return.

And these two weren’t dangerous, at least according to Jack, so it was fine for now.

Escaping this damned shelter was the most important thing.

The robots were getting closer and closer to finding them, and being stuck in this underground shelter was becoming increasingly unbearable.

It would be nice to monopolize the unknown weapon hidden below, but Samuel wasn't confident enough in the weapon for him to go all out against those robots.

They needed a shield.

Like the ones they had in the past.

Before Melchizedek betrayed them.

'It was nice when they protected us...'

As Samuel grit his teeth at the thought of those transcendents who'd left them behind and gone up— —Hansoo organized his thoughts and asked a question.

"Are there perhaps any abyssal beings living in the tunnels?"

And Samuel smirked inwardly at this question.

He clearly knew why Hansoo was asking such a question.

'Even a powerful person like him is trying to avoid fighting, huh?'

Well, it would be weird if he was actively looking for a fight.

Why would they bother fighting if they could actually retrieve that weapon?

Samuel continued to explain.

It hurt his pride, but he needed to make themselves look good.

"Don't worry. We are doing our best to keep ourselves hidden. Almost two hundred people are sustaining the barrier, and we're even using artifacts to reinforce it. How could the abyssal beings find us when even Melchizedek cannot?"

They had always been meticulous about staying hidden in case of the scouting machines.

All so they could dig out that precious weapon buried below.

'And if they can help us... it would be faster.'

Although they'd been digging at a good pace until now, they had started to encounter the harder, rocky layers, and could only dig out a few dozen meters in a day.

But if these two could help them out, it would only take an instant to finish.

Samuel smiled as he thought of the mutual benefits for both parties.

But Hansoo seemed to have lost interest as he said: "We're leaving."

"Yes."

"Huh?"

Kiriell nodded, a bored expression already on her face, and Samuel was left flustered at what had just happened.

'Huh?...Why?'

.....

—rummmblee—

'Annoying.'

Kiriell looked at the small group of males following her and Hansoo.

"Are you coming with us?"

And Jack, who'd been leading the group next to Kiriell, nodded.

"Yes, we plan to."

"You aren't expecting us to protect you, right?"

Jack shook his head.

"No, no. We'll manage our own work ourselves. I'm sure we can be of help."

Jack looked back at the shelter that he'd once placed so much hope on. It was now far behind them.

In the past, he had once thought of that shelter as their final ray of hope.

He knew that as long as they could dig out whatever was below it, they would gain the chance to get back at the metal cans.

But not anymore.

‘From their reactions... there’s a chance that the thing hidden below won’t be as amazing as we expected.’

Jack thought to himself as he looked at the duo.

Those two people were moving around as if they already knew a lot about this place.

And he had lost all interest after hearing their words.

The thing hidden below might be something his group would find amazing.

But it seemed like it wouldn’t be for these two transcendents.

Logically speaking, shouldn’t they stick with the stronger side then?

Samuel couldn't bear to give up the shelter, and so he had stayed behind. But Jack couldn’t let this opportunity go.

But at least he’d stayed loyal.

When Jack had been about to leave, Samuel had said: <Please... It’s okay to leave, but please do keep quiet about this.> If he had voiced out his thoughts on the way out, there would be many more following the two of them.

At least half of them would.

Of course, he never planned to say anything, even without Samuel’s plea.

Since it wouldn’t be good for him either if more competitors came along.

‘I cannot let this woman go.’

Jack stared at Kiriel.

It was a chance of a lifetime.

Blinding beauty and earth-shaking strength.

If such a powerful and beautiful woman were to protect him?

The probability of him surviving in the future would become much higher.

And it wouldn't be a bad choice for the woman as well.

It was a bit too much for him to say with his own mouth, but he was one heck of a hunk.

He had almost never failed at getting a girl in the past.

His face was more than enough, but his trait, which allowed him to read a woman's emotions, was basically made to bewitch women.

Kiriel shrugged at Jack and looked to Hansoo.

As if she was asking Hansoo if this was fine.

Hansoo looked at Jack and said:

“Go back. It's not too late.”

But Jack shook his head.

He could not let this chance go, and he knew a small fact about the robots.

“We can protect ourselves. Just leave us behind if we become a nuisance, we aren't that selfish.”

He wasn't sticking around for no reason.

The artificial robots naturally aimed for stronger beings.

Which meant that this was safer for them.

While the two of them distracted the robots, their group could just fight the weaker ones or stay hidden.

He just needed to hold on until he established a good relationship with that woman.

‘Trust me... I won’t be in any danger.’

But something came into Jack’s eyes, and he laughed to himself.

‘...What is that?’

Jack frowned at Hansoo, who was opening and closing his hands.

It seemed like Hansoo was measuring something.

Chapter 343 : Refinement (2)

‘...What is he doing? That’s bothering me.’

Jack continued looking at Hansoo strangely.

For some reason, he was bothered by Hansoo’s hands.

But he didn’t show it, of course.

‘I’m not that much of an amateur.’

Jack thought.

He’d realized something after living with a trait that read a person’s emotions.

That a person needed to be slightly different inwardly and outwardly.

If their inside thoughts and actual actions were the same, then they lost the barrier that protected them.

Anyone would be able to read them and guess their next actions and thoughts.

And he had seen quite a lot of people fall into despair when that happened.

‘Oh well, I guess I’ll be friendly with you too.’

“Just a curious thought, why did you just leave? Is it because a weapon like that is useless once you’re that strong?”

He didn’t really like hanging out with other men, but there was no harm in becoming acquainted with someone as strong as Hansoo. And so he had asked.

He was a bit curious too.

As to why Hansoo had thrown away that weapon.

Hansoo shook his head.

“No, it’s not because of that.”

‘What the hell?’

As Jack frowned—

—Hansoo smiled and continued to speak.

“Do you know what Melchizedek wants?”

“...No. How could I?”

‘And how could you?’

Hansoo had said that the two of them had come from below.

How could such people know about Melchizedek’s thoughts?

He only knew one thing about Melchizedek.

If there weren’t any transcendents around, it would attack them without a single thought.

From what he’d heard, there were two transcendents that were leagues above others of their kind at the top of the 5th zone.

If they didn’t exist, then Melchizedek wouldn’t even have suggested an alliance in the first place.

‘Damn... Why did they go up?’

“He wishes to win this battle.”

“Against us?”

Hansoo shook his head.

He had been able to chat with Melchizedek in the past.

Before it had become violent.

When it had still treated humans favorably.

<I... I despise the ones who sent me here.> Hansoo looked towards the sky.

At a planet, which was countless times larger than this moon. It seemed tiny because it was so far from where they stood.

He looked at several other moons orbiting around the planet.

Moons with other races that wouldn't have made contact with the humans if everything had stayed the same.

Melchizedek's enemy was not the humans, but those who lived on that planet.

And this was probably why he'd asked for an alliance.

'There is no point in wasting strength against the humans.'

But the current situation was now the exact opposite.

Melchizedek and the transcendents were at war.

And all the transcendents that used to be here had already gone up.

Which meant one thing.

One side had agitated the other first, and as a result, they had to fight with all they had.

And Hansoo could guess who had started this.

'F***ing Clementine. It's as if you'd die if you remained still.'

Kiriel asked again in confusion.

"Why did they attack Melchizedek? There's nothing in it for them."

At least the abyssal beings gave out crystals—there was nothing to gain from Melchizedek.

At least from what she knew.

But Hansoo smiled.

"Even if there's nothing to take from the other... if your objectives are the same, then you're bound to fight sooner or later."

At that moment—

—rumble—

—a huge earthquake had started, causing all nearby objects to

tremble vigorously.

Jack and Kiriel looked around in shock.

‘What the hell is this?’

As if a heart was beating.

Vibrations started to occur in rhythmic intervals.

—boom—boom—boom—boom—

‘... Huh?’

The entire moon trembled to the beat.

As if something hidden inside was doing its best to escape.

At that moment, Kiriel thought of the excavation center.

The machines that were working crazily in an attempt to dig out the object that was hidden inside the moon.

Then—

—rumble!—

A tremendous earthquake occurred, countless times stronger than the one from before.

“Ahhhh!”

“Uahh!”

Jack and the others tried their best to maintain their balance.

A normal earthquake wouldn’t really hurt the few of them who had transcended far past the limits of a human.

Since even an earthquake measuring a magnitude 6 would only feel like a train passing nearby.

But this was different.

It felt as if the entire land itself was going to flip over, and a huge bomb was about to explode beneath them.

And at that moment—

—crack—

—crackle—

—clang—

The ground, which was mostly composed of solid metal, started to crack and split.

The barrier that was barely maintaining its shape in the sky was ripped apart, completely breaking down.

The entire colony that had been built upon the moon started to collapse.

The land itself was transforming.

As if something that had been rolled up was now stretching itself out.

‘What the f***!’

Jack cursed inwardly. He’d managed to hold on by embedding his hands and feet into the metal.

—cruunnchh—

—swoosh—

The distant horizon rose up into the sky.

And the huge, but still round, moon started to uncurl itself.

Then—

—boom!—

Something started to rise up from the city.

“Ahhhh!”

Everyone panicked at seeing the metal spikes rising up from the ground.

Well, they could only be described as spike-like.

These so-called ‘spikes’ were hundreds of meters tall and were

spaced out every few kilometers or so.

Each spike almost resembled a small mountain.

—rumble—

‘What in the world is going on?!’

Kiriell freaked out at the huge spike rising up in front of them.

It was like watching a mountain being born right before your eyes.

And how can the ground stay intact after a thing like this pops through it?

The countless artificial metal pieces that had covered the moon had all been shattered and shredded apart, and they were now floating up into the atmosphere.

Past the now broken-down barrier.

‘We’ll be flung off at this rate!’

As Kiriell freaked out from seeing her body rising alongside the spikes— —boom!—

“Hold onto this thing!”

—Hansoo smashed his hand into the rising spike and shouted to the people around him.

And everyone’s expressions brightened up.

‘Yes, that!’

Although the artificial metal plates may fly up, this spike wouldn’t since it had come from below.

Everyone brightened up, and they started to smash their hands into the spike as well.

—crack!—

—crunch!—

‘Damn... this is really tough.’

Jack frowned at the pain in his hand after attempting to smash it into the spike.

He'd thought he could easily hold on to it since Hansoo's and Kiriel's hands had gone through it like it was tofu.

‘Well, at least we're safe for now.’

Jack sighed in relief as he hung down from the spike which was gradually slowing its ascent.

—rumble—

After calming down, he was finally able to look around.

And this was an amazing place to do it since he was a couple of kilometers in the air.

‘Oh god...’

Jack freaked out as he looked around.

The city that they'd just been in had been shredded apart.

Of course, how could a city remain intact when the land beneath it had transformed and spread out?

Plus these spikes.

The force of these spikes rising up had caused all the remaining mass to fly up into the atmosphere.

Far past the now ripped-apart barrier.

—rumble—

And in the midst of this chaos—

—roaaaaarrr!—

—a huge roar rang out throughout the moon.

Well, throughout the moon-like ‘thing.’

Kiriel finally realized what the excavation center had been living on this whole time.

And exactly what they had worked so hard to dig out.

“...This isn’t a moon.”

“Yeah, it is a weapon though.”

A giant stingray-shaped monster had uncurled itself and was now flapping its wings, looking poised to traverse through space.

But it didn’t really look like a natural being.

If it were, then it wouldn’t have thousands of assault weapons attached to its back.

‘This... these aren’t spikes. They’re cannons.’

Kiriel was freaking out; she’d used Psychometry on the giant spike she was clinging to.

The hole at the top of this so-called ‘spike’.

And the artificial patterns on the interior walls of this cannon.

‘...Indeed. It is a weapon.’

Kiriel mumbled.

It was a weapon.

But it was not a sword or a gun like she’d initially imagined.

Hansoo mumbled to himself as he looked at the giant living weapon, <Nelkipa>.

‘This is just the beginning.’

The excavation center was digging at the wrong spot anyway.

That was merely this lifeform’s leather^[a]^[b] back.

They might find its muscles or nerves, but they would never be able to get to the core.

‘You need to dig for the head.’

Melchizedek and Clementine.

One of the two had succeeded in taking over the control tower of

this living weapon.

Since the two would have warred with the other to take control.
He'd be able to figure it out pretty soon anyway.

'Let's see...'

The planet that Nelkipa had been orbiting, <Angkara>.

And another weaponized moon that was orbiting the planet,
<Karakana>.

As Hansoo mumbled at the sight of the main planet and the few
other moons— —roaaarr!—

—the stingray started to fly towards a particular direction.

Towards the bright red main planet, <Angkara>.

And Hansoo smiled bitterly at this.

'I guess Melchizedek won.'

If it had been Clementine, then it would've headed towards the
weaponized moon for him to take over the <Dragon God's Armor>.

But the result was the exact opposite.

The Nelkipa was heading towards the main planet.

And Hansoo spoke out.

"Prepare for impact."

"Huh?"

As Kiriel asked—

—Hansoo pointed towards the sky with a smile.

"This is just the beginning."

'They're not going to just sit around and watch.'

Then—

—rummble—

From the surface of the main planet, <Angkara>.

Tens of thousands of small dots shone out as something shot out towards <Nelkipa>.

“...This is the real war.”

‘What Melchizedek truly wanted.’

“What the f***?!”

As Jack screamed—

—boboboooboboooboboom!—

—a giant flaming pillar struck the surface of Nelkipa.

[a]is this correct

[b]Yas

Chapter 344 : Refinement (3)

—boooooom!—

Countless pillars of flames fell down from the sky and smashed into the ground.

—boom!—

—boooooom!—

The few pieces of scrap and rubble left behind immediately evaporated into gas.

They didn't even liquify and instead had immediately turned into gas.

‘Oh my god.’

Jack was in a daze as he stared at the super dense materials disappearing into nothing.

The materials didn't even get hit directly yet.

—bobooboom!—

Tens of thousands of attacks were flying towards them, but the Nelkipa was so huge that those attacks had quite a distance between them before they struck down.

But the issue lay somewhere else.

“Won't we all die at this rate?”

—roaaarr!—

Jack shouted, listening to the giant roars of Nelkipa.

Even if they didn't get hit by those attacks, would it matter?

If this giant lifeform they were all standing on melted down, they would follow suit.

Since they'd end up lost in space.

And looking at the tens of thousands of attacks that were striking

at them, that was actually a possibility.

Even if the lifeform was the size of a moon, the attacks striking at them seemed to have the power to do so.

But Hansoo just pointed towards the ground below.

“Look below.”

“...?”

And as Jack looked down, he couldn’t believe his eyes.

‘No way...’

—ssssss—

Beneath the melting and evaporating city.

A bright land appeared.

Well, the bright skin of the lifeform they were on—the Nelkipa’s back.

—boom!—

—boom!—

Although countless pillars of flames were striking down at the ground, the Nelkipa’s skin seemed to be fine.

‘Wha...what?’

Kiriel was at a loss.

Nelkipa’s skin should not be able to withstand such a powerful attack.

He knew this because the excavation center he had been living in was tasked with the job of digging into Nelkipa’s skin.

He hadn’t known it was the skin back then, but because it consisted of metals and ores, he knew that even ordinary people like him could melt it down.

Although the skin had grown increasingly harder the deeper they dug, they had managed to dig through the surface so it should’ve

melted down at least.

Jack focused his eyes on this strange sight, and then soon realized why the Nelkipa's bright skin could resist the attacks.

‘That...’

The bright blue layers, which they had believed to be veins of ore, were transforming.

Resembling crystals or diamonds.

—boom!—

As another attack smashed into the surface of Nelkipa, the several hundred meters of skin started to turn bright and shiny.

It then dispersed, absorbed, and deflected almost every bit of the remaining fire.

Like a drop of rain hitting an umbrella and sliding down, the countless pillars of flame could not penetrate into Nelkipa's skin and instead spread back into space.

“Ah...”

“This is why Melchizedek wanted it.”

—boom!—

—boooom!—

Hansoo replied expressionlessly beside them as they watched the attacks raining down from above.

Melchizedek wasn't stupid.

It wouldn't start a war that it had no chances of winning against.

Just Angkara's attacks alone weren't enough to stop Nelkipa.

Kiriell looked confused as she asked Hansoo:

“Who... made this?”

She'd initially thought that this might be a natural born creature, but her thoughts had now changed.

Looking at everything from the cannons and the marks on the skin, it was clear that somebody had built this artificially.

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders at her words.

“How would I know?”

—rummmble—

—rumble—

If they’d made this at the main planet, Angkara, they would have never set up an excavation center in the first place.

Since there would’ve been no reason for the colony to investigate something they had made themselves.

Of course, that wasn’t the important thing in the current situation.

—boom! boom!—

Hansoo looked at the raining attacks as he said: “Let’s go.”

“...Where?”

Jack replied with a heavy voice amidst the thundering booms.

Where could they go in this current situation?

Hansoo replied:

“To the research center. As per our original plan.”

This giant creature, Nelkipa, was headed for the main planet <Angkara>.

Under Melchizedek’s control.

If they left it alone, then it would definitely reach the <Angkara> and land on the planet.

Then the true war would begin.

Between the slowly accumulated forces of Melchizedek on the Nelkipa— —and the race of Angkara who’d been tempered by countless battles and wars.

‘I cannot let that happen.’

Hansoo thought to himself.

He could not.

The 5th zone would become a true sea of flames at that point.

Something much worse than this.

This was just the beginning.

This was not the most powerful attack that Angkara could send out.

It was just the fastest and easiest method of attack, which is why they’d activated it the moment Nelkipa started to move.

He needed to act before the war became more serious and more powerful weapons came into play.

He needed to take control of this giant monster.

And the easiest method was...

‘Catching Melchizedek.’

Melchizedek’s underlings were the ones that actually fought.

Which meant Melchizedek should be at the topmost or the bottommost floor.

‘Hostages have traditionally been proven to be useful.’

Since he didn’t have the strength to go to the actual control center yet, this was the next best option.

But there were clearly a few people who did not agree with him.

“What? Are you crazy? You don’t even know if there’s anything still there.”

“Damn! Shouldn’t we be heading to the elevator instead?”

Jack and the others who had followed Hansoo shouted in objection.

How would they know if anything remained of the research center?

It should've been turned into a pile of dust by now.

But Hansoo only chuckled at them.

"I never told to you follow me, right? And the research center should be fine."

"What?"

Before they could continue—

"I'm leaving. Let's go Kiriel."

"Yes."

—Hansoo loosened his hand and fell down to the ground a few kilometers beneath them.

—boom!—

"Crazy bas..."

As Jack was at a loss watching Hansoo and Kiriel falling down—
—one of the people who'd followed Jack asked from behind:
"What shall we do now?"

Whether they went to the elevator or followed them, going down was the first priority.

Of course, he still had questions.

'The research center should be fine? What did he mean by that?'

But Jack soon pushed away that thought as he focused on getting back down to the ground.

.....

—booooooooooom!—

—booom!—

"Ugh... Everyone focus on using ice-type skills and movement-type skills!"

Jack shouted out.

The moment they returned to the ground, a blazing degree of heat smacked them right on their bodies.

The metallic steam threatened to scorch their lungs, and the heat deflected from Nelkipa's bright skin threatened to cook the soles of their shoes.

Of course, the attacks hadn't stopped either.

—rummble—

Jack watched the line of fire, calculated its trajectory and then shouted: "Dodge!"

As soon as he shouted out, everyone activated their movement skills to the max and started to run away from their current positions.

And as they escaped—

—boooooooooom!—

—the area surrounding their previous location had turned into a sea of fire several hundred meters wide.

From the giant pillar of fire that had come down from the sky.

...chiiiiii...

Despite dodging the fire, another wave of heat blasted down on their faces, so strong that it had almost destroyed their defensive skills.

Jack started to frown.

'Damn. Thank god it moves in a straight line.'

It was an extremely fast attack, but due to the sheer distance of its origin, one could easily predict where it would land.

If they couldn't, then they would be roasted whole by now.

'This... this would even destroy the robots as well. Should we just

run to the elevator?’

Jack mumbled as he measured the heat on the ground.

They wouldn't melt down from this heat, but these attacks were not something those robots could withstand.

Which meant that even their tiny group would be able to get past the robots and reach the elevator.

‘But... what do we do after we go up?’

This giant Nelkipa was the entire 5th zone.

Even if they went up a floor, it was still above the Nelkipa.

They wouldn't be able to dodge the flames anyway.

And more than anything else, he could not give up on Kiriel.

‘Where did they even go?’

Jack, completely bewitched by Kiriel, looked around to try and guess which direction she had gone.

—boooom!—

—clang!—

At that moment, they could hear the sounds of clashes in the distance.

‘There!’

As Jack subconsciously followed the sound—

“Huh? You followed us?”

—a voice could be heard through the metallic steam clouds.

‘Woah.’

Jack was shocked because he was still some distance away from the location of the sound.

He had thought that they'd be fighting together.

He saw that Kiriel was staring into the distance as if enchanted.

‘What is she looking at?’

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

Something was fighting against something else and causing a huge ruckus.

‘Who is he fighting with?’

The metallic steam and the powerful shock waves had turned the surrounding air hazy.

It was clear that the silhouette swinging the hammer around was Hansoo, but he could not identify the other being that Hansoo was fighting against.

Then—

—boooooom!—

‘F***...!’

Jack freaked out at the pillar of flame that was aiming straight at them.

And shockingly, three of those pillars combined with one another, and their range had increased to the entire surroundings in its area.

At this rate, that attack would hit everyone here.

‘Damn, we have to dodge.’

“Hey! Mr. Hansoo! Dodge it!”

—boom!—

—boom!—

He shouted at Hansoo, who was still fighting within the metallic steam, but Hansoo didn’t seem to hear as he continued to focus on attacking his opponent.

‘Damn...’

He had shouted to help, but there was no way for him to drag Hansoo out forcibly.

Of course, he didn't want to do it either.

He then grabbed Kiriel's wrist and pulled her back.

"Please! We have to move!"

And as if she understood his words, she moved back and out of range as well.

Jack's expression brightened up.

To him, it seemed like she had given Hansoo up.

'Good.'

And as they all escaped the range of the attack— —boooooom!—
—a giant pillar of flame crashed down from the sky, followed by blazing waves of heat that swept over them.

Jack inwardly sighed in relief as he looked at the scene since Hansoo should've been hit directly by it.

'Good. This is... for the better.'

It was sad that Hansoo had died that way, but this was good.

Since it wouldn't be good for him to follow that dumb bastard who'd insisted on going to the research center in a situation like this.

If Hansoo had died, then Kiriel wouldn't have anyone to rely on. He just needed to seduce her well and then take her up.

—tatata—

As Jack thought to himself—

"Damn it..."

"...?"

—Kiriel's small words made Jack's eyes move towards the place where the flame pillar had been. She was still staring at the exact

spot she had been in.

And he freaked out.

‘No way...’

Amidst the sea of flames, something was continuously regenerating and burning up as it stood up.

With a more powerful and condensed aura than before.

Like a blade that had been retempered and refined again.

As Jack saw this scene, chills ran down his entire back.

‘He... he didn’t dodge on purpose. That insane bastard.’

Was that something a sane person would do?

Jack continued to stare, at a loss for words.

Chapter 345 : Refinement (4)

—boom!—

It continued to destroy and regenerate his body amidst the pillar of flame.

The Immortal Soul squeezed out every drop of power in the body to save its owner.

It frenziedly regenerated new tissue and burnt up pieces of bone.

—rumble—

As he grabbed the hammer again, Hansoo felt that the Immortal Soul's mastery had risen by quite a bit.

He didn't have the time to slowly raise its mastery.

The war had begun, and he needed to stop it before it blew up completely.

It would be nice if Melchizedek was on the first floor, but he had to prepare for the worst case scenario.

A scenario where he'd have to go up against Clementine and Melchizedek's underlings and forcibly take over the control center.

'It's... not quite enough.'

Hansoo mumbled as he felt the Immortal Soul's mastery level rising.

This was a good method, but it wasn't enough.

He needed a stronger opponent.

Something that could push him beyond burning his flesh.

Something that could push him to his limits.

'Well, they never died easily... There's a chance they can do that to me.'

—clank—

—clang—

Hansoo tightened his grip on the hammer, mumbling to himself as he watched the three silhouettes walking out from the now-dispersing pillar of flames.

.....

‘What the hell are those things...?’

Kiriel mumbled as she looked at the three figures that were slowly walking towards Hansoo.

‘Are they transcendents as well?’

If Hansoo, a transcendent, could withstand having flames melt down his skin, then the only reasonable explanation that his opponents could do the same must be because they were also transcendents.

Maybe they were even stronger.

They didn’t seem the least bit injured from the flames—the same flames that had even burned Hansoo.

At that moment, a thought flashed past Kiriel’s head.

3-Star transcendents.

‘Shit... This isn’t good.’

There were three of them as well.

‘I must help.’

But as Kiriel was about to dash towards Hansoo— —clang!—

—the sound of something clashing with another rang throughout the air.

Then—

—swoosh!—

Something flew out at lightning speed and smashed onto the debris near Kiriel.

“Hansoo!”

Kiriell dashed towards the pile of debris in dismay.

But then her expression changed.

—jijijijiiiik—

‘It’s not Hansoo?’

—crackle—

—kacha—

Kiriell mumbled as she looked at the strange thing crawling out with broken limbs.

She’d thought that it would be much stronger than Hansoo since it had been able to withstand those flames.

So she’d expected Hansoo to be flung away.

But in the end, the one sent flying had been one of the three beings that had walked towards him.

The thing crawled out from the debris and stood up, looking at its right arm expressionlessly.

—crunch!—

It snapped it off with its left arm, and then threw it to the ground.

—chijijik—

‘Machine? No, a cyborg?’

There was indeed flesh, muscle, and bones within the wound.

But there were also strange machine parts in between the bits of organic matter.

As though a human and a machine had been merged together.

The mysterious being, who had just broken off his arm, looked around its surroundings.

Then it flew towards Kiriell at a speed faster than when it had been flung away.

—boooooom!—

Kiriell quickly reinforced the space around her body, and cut across the air with the Ark-Roa's Fang in her hand.

—clank!—

As soon as the cyborg saw the fang, it raised its left arm as if it were trying to protect itself.

Instantly, a translucent, hexagonal shield appeared in front of the cyborg.

—ooooong—

Inside the cyborg, strange nanobots vibrated as they supplied the shield with energy.

—boom!—

The fang and the shield collided.

‘They can even use skills?... And what is that?’

Kiriell looked at the strange machine parts that were emitting light from the cyborg's hands.

She had been envious of the strange tools that Jack had used in the past.

But now it seemed like those were mere toys compared to this cyborg's contraptions.

She looked at the cyborg's left arm which had been split apart by the fang...and then smiled.

‘Good enough.’

Kiriell's expression lit up.

It was not weak.

It was stronger than normal transcendents because of its strange

skills and advanced technology.

It was at least several times stronger than those on the brink of being a 1-Star.

But that was it.

They may be a threat to normal adventurers, but they were still a level below her.

‘But seriously... it’s well-designed.’

The strange machine parts and nanobots seemed to have been there since the cyborg’s creation; they had strengthened its every movement and skill.

Kiriell decided to slowly split it apart so she could analyze as much as she possible.

But then—

“Ahhhh!”

The normal adventurers accompanying Jack had been watching the scene in a daze, when suddenly they started to scream and run away.

‘Damn...’

Kiriell had been slowly walking away as well, but now she clenched her teeth.

She realized why they were acting this way.

—whooosh!—

She could feel the heat of the flaming pillar as it descended.

Power that could even melt down Hansoo, who was countless times stronger than herself.

If the pillar were to hit her, she would most likely end up half-dead.

‘Damn it! I might die!’

While Kiriel tried to run away from that location— —crunch!—
—crack!—

—the cyborg she'd been fighting with had flung itself at her to hold her down.

“No...!”

She tried to smash away the cyborg with the fang in her hands, but its spine seemed to hold some strange mechanism that activated a form of gravitational pull on Kiriel.

‘Damn!’

Kiriel frowned as she penetrated the cyborg with the fang.

Due to the differences in their strength, she'd been able to puncture a huge hole straight through its chest to its spine. But the cyborg ignored the blow as if it were unaffected by the pain, smashing its legs into the ground.

—boom!—

—boom!—

The Nelkipa's skin was resistant to the flaming attacks, yet it could also be burrowed through with ease.

The cyborg planted its feet deeply into the skin, effectively immobilizing its own body as well as Kiriel's movements.

‘Damn it!’

Dodging the descending attack was now out of the question.

Kiriel sank down to her knees as she looked at the flaming pillar; it was nearly above her head.

—whoooosh!—

“Go”

“Huh?”

Something appeared by her side and smacked away the cyborg

from holding her down, then pulled on her arm.

—tonk!—

Kiriel flew backwards the moment the cyborg lost its grip.

—booooooooooooooooooom!—

A huge pillar of flame slammed onto the spot where she'd been just moments ago.

“Hansoo?”

‘Did he push me away?’

Kiriel found her balance and then stared at the flaming spot.

Hansoo had flung her away and received the attack instead.

—clank!—

She heard the sound of something breaking again, and a figure flew out from the flames.

“Woah...”

In a daze, Jack and the other adventurers stared at the figure coming out of the flames.

Hansoo walked out from the flames with the hammer in his hand—his muscles and skin were constantly being healed.

—chiiii—

The head of the cyborg, despite having received such damage, was constantly looking back and forth between Hansoo and the surrounding people.

—crunch!—

Hansoo stomped over the cyborg's head as he spoke.

“Melchizedek prepared quite well. It even applied a repulsion coating.”

Kiriel then realized what was going on.

As to how this thing, which was weaker than herself, had managed to withstand the heat that could even melt down Hansoo.

‘...Yeah. It must’ve prepared.’

Melchizedek was a being that had been made from the main planet Angkara and then sent here.

It would have data about that place’s weapons.

Of course, it would’ve long prepared its forces for the war against Angkara.

But Kiriel couldn’t relax.

That planet belonged to a race that could fire these powerful attacks without stopping.

For Melchizedek to prepare a war against such a race?

She could vaguely guess the strength of Melchizedek’s forces currently running around Nelkipa.

As well as the forces of the race Melchizedek had prepared this much for.

‘This is just the beginning...’

The flaming pillars and the cyborgs that withstood them were just the beginning.

Kiriel then looked to Hansoo and asked:

“Are you okay?”

Hansoo nodded.

“I’m feeling great.”

Hansoo smiled contentedly as he looked at his body that was regenerating at a much faster rate than before.

The best environment to train.

Of course, he wanted to just sit around here and continue training.

‘Can’t forget my goals.’

Becoming strong was just part of the process.

What mattered was the victory itself.

And what he needed for a victory was not training, but real battles.

It was better for the Immortal Soul when one received many different types of external stimuli as well.

Of course, he wasn’t worried that he wouldn’t receive such stimuli.

‘For it to be capable of making transcendent level creatures... I guess I won’t be bored on the journey to the research center.’

Hansoo mumbled as he looked at the crushed head beneath his feet.

.....

—rummble—

‘All three died...’

The giant train continued to dash forward, despite having received countless strikes thanks to the repulsion coating.

The humanoid standing in the center of the research center frowned as three signals disappeared from its head.

It thought that three of its artificial transcents would be enough to win when fighting amidst the flames.

One of the beings was much stronger than it had expected.

‘I’ll need to hurry a little more.’

“Kang Hansoo... He is called Hansoo.”

The humanoid continued to stare at the test tubes in front of it, mumbling the name of the man its three underlings had been compiling data for.

—bubble bubble—

In one of the test tubes, an artificial transcendent jolted as Melchizedek mumbled Hansoo's name.

Chapter 346 : Inhabitants (1)

“Are... are you really Kang Hansoo?”

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders at the other's expressions—they were staring at him in disbelief.

“I told you my name earlier.”

Jack thought to himself.

‘...Who would believe that?’

There were too many people pretending to be Kang Hansoo.

Especially among those who were a bit stronger.

And it was easier to treat the people calling themselves Hansoo as fakes when Hansoo had been missing for the past two years.

But watching this man's reckless actions, he seemed to be the real deal.

There were a lot of people pretending to be him, but none like this one.

Jack continued to mumble, delight filling up his face.

—chiiii—

Kiriell muttered worriedly as she used her Psychometry on the demolished artificial transcendent.

“It's not going to be easy.”

—boom! boom! boom!—

Countless attacks rained down from the sky...

Kiriell's expression turned sour as she saw this scene with her Psychometry.

‘This isn't going to be easy at all.’

She saw it in this thing's memory.

The clear recollection of its birthplace, the Main Research Center.

Thanks to this, she had been able to figure out what guarded the research center.

‘...At least twenty more like this have been made.’

At least.

‘...I knew the 5th zone received more high-quality abyssal crystals than the 4th, but still. I guess finding a 1-Star is quite easy.’

Only twenty 1-Star transcendents had been found after combing the entire zone below, but here they were found with alarming ease.

At least twenty in this floor alone...

Thankfully, every single one of these things were only at the 1-Star level, but it still wasn’t a situation where they could relax.

Since more of them might be made after this.

And there was the issue of the environment as well.

The enemy forces held the absolute advantage in this environment.

They were all resistant to the flames falling down from the skies.

She and Hansoo had to dodge those attacks while they fought—it was not a favorable situation at all.

Normally, she could’ve easily crushed them, but instead she’d almost died in that last battle.

In addition, their foes had thousands of foot soldiers.

And despite being foot soldiers, they were also protected by the repulsion coating. This meant that the soldiers could freely attack them from behind while they were focused on fighting the artificial transcendents.

‘This is suicidal.’

—rumble—

Kiriel mumbled as she watched the countless pillars of flames descending all around her.

After using his trait to read her emotions, Jack asked carefully: “Isn’t it better to go up? Do we have to stay and...”

‘Just die like that?’

Jack looked towards Hansoo.

Why would someone charge into the factory where these monstrous robots were being made?

“Let’s just go up... Wouldn’t the 6th zone be better?”

Of course, they didn’t know what the 6th zone was like.

But would it be any worse than this place?

They could just fill up the runes on the way up.

‘It’s not like those guys are lacking in crystals anyway.’

Jack mumbled to himself as he glanced at Kiriel and Hansoo.

That would be perfect.

But—

Hansoo didn’t give Jack the answer he wanted.

‘Damn it. If he was a girl, I could have charmed him away.’

He didn’t want to deal with a male, nor did he feel like it would work.

Jack looked at Hansoo, who seemed to be lost in thought after hearing his words, and continued to speak.

He wanted to get out of this hell as fast as possible.

“It’s not like there’s anyone to help you, right? The other transcendents have already gone up... and it’s not like us ordinary

people could help out. Are you planning to charge into the research center with just the two of you?”

But Hansoo smiled at these words.

“What do you mean? There are people who are willing to help.”

The expressions on Jack and the others turned grim.

“...Us? F***.”

Why were they trying to swing at a dragon’s scales with a butcher knife meant for killing chickens?

Maybe they might have been able to do something if flames weren’t raining down their heads, but they were barely holding onto their own lives.

To charge into a whole factory swarming with these things?

Insane.

Hansoo chuckled.

“Don’t worry. I’m not asking you to fight.”

“Then who?”

Kiriel asked Hansoo as she was also curious.

She didn’t know if there was anybody else of use around.

‘...For real, though. We’re the only two around.’

Hansoo replied.

“I know someone that Melchizedek would hate even more than me.”

And Jack cursed at these words.

‘F***... Who the hell is this bastard?’

He knew as well.

There was a reason why he hadn’t mentioned them.

This ‘Hansoo’ guy seemed like he’d charge straight into the

factory as soon as his chances of winning rose by even a single percent.

If he really did just come up, then he shouldn't be able to know, but...

Jack's expression turned grim at Hansoo's next words.

"Wouldn't the people protecting Melchizedek's masters...be quite angry right now?"

The ones who had brought Melchizedek to Nelkipa, but had lost their power due to Melchizedek's revolt.

'And we have a guide to take us there as well.'

Hansoo smiled as he looked at Jack, whose expression had darkened at the mention of the inhabitants from <Angkara>.

.....

"Why are you being like this? I swear, I don't know. I'm serious...!"

"Kiriel."

"Yes."

Kiriel started to walk over with a smile.

"Please! That feels disgusting! Stop!"

Jack shouted in anger as he backed away.

He wouldn't be able to move once she surrounded him with her ability.

'Damn... I'm going to die anyway!'

His opponent was indeed strong, too strong for him to argue against, but he was being backed into a corner.

If they read his memories and dragged him into being a guide, he would have to crawl into that hellhole.

'And... who knows?'

Jack looked at Kiriel with hope.

Previously, she'd stopped using her ability when he protested from embarrassment.

Which meant that she wasn't unreasonable.

And unlike men, women usually treated him better.

Kiriel might even stop that crazy Hansoo as well.

But sadly...

—smack!—

Instead of eyes filled with pity, a slap came at him instead.

“Kuhuk...!”

“Do you think we're playing around here?”

Kiriel eyed him coldly as she gripped his neck.

Of course, they could just go up if they wanted.

But then those who would die after they left would number in the tens of millions.

Whether Melchizedek won.

Or Clementine won.

Or even if the inhabitants of Angkara won.

The only thing waiting for the ones coming up after them was destruction.

And Hansoo was trying to stop that from happening with his own body.

‘Do you think just looking a little pretty is everything?’

She'd been so shocked to see Hansoo's body melting amidst his battles.

It meant that this was dangerous, even for Hansoo.

But he was still willing to go.

‘Yeah... ‘

Kiriel blushed as she glanced at Hansoo and then tightened her grip on Jack’s neck.

“Ughhh...”

Jack let out a groan of pain as his body rose up into the sky.

It was a scene that defied gravity, but nobody thought it was weird.

Since they realized something they’d forgotten about until now.

This beautiful girl in front of them.

And the difference in strength between them.

—kiiiririring—

Kiriel started to read the memories within Jack’s body.

And Kiriel scoffed at these scenes.

‘He lives up to his face, alright.’

Girl after girl.

There was not a single moment where he wasn’t with a girl.

A different one in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night.

Sometimes even two.

Sometimes even more.

If this guy had spent those times fighting and hunting, he would’ve long become a transcendent.

‘Both this guy... and those girls.’

Kiriel decided to leave his personal life alone and began to rewind through them at a faster speed.

Then—

—poof—

“Ha...haaa.”

Kiriel released Jack, who gasped for breath, and turned around.

“Found it.”

Kiriel smiled at Hansoo.

.....

—rumble—

The spikes rising up from Nelkipa’s body reached high into the sky.

Below the giant Nelkipa’s structure that the inhabitants of Angkara had named the <NEEDLE>— —some sort of translucent object was squirming around.

Then—

—boom!—

An attack from Angkara smashed into the space right above the squirming object.

—chiizzt—

The squirming object disappeared with a small sound, and something appeared below it.

A giant armored vehicle that was at least 200 meters large.

And from inside the strange-looking vehicle— —the voices from hundreds of people could heard.

“Phew... If it weren’t for the repulsion coating, that photon strike would’ve turned us into powder.”

“Is the shield working well?”

From those words—

—chijiiiiik—

—one of them nodded as they pointed towards the squirming translucent barrier.

“There’s no issues! It should... be able to hold.”

“Hahaha! We’re alive!”

“That bastard Melchizedek! He thinks he can fight us?”

The hundreds of people inside the armored vehicle shouted out in glee.

These photon strikes may seem like a rain of fire to others, but in the eyes of these people, those very attacks were like fireworks celebrating their return.

How long had they been on the run after Melchizedek had taken away their control?

But it was different now.

They would finally be able to return home.

Their proud nation, the <Neropa Union>, would not let this rogue A.I be.

But a few of them spoke with dark expressions.

Especially the N-levels who had the most important jobs.

One of them, <N-Maria>, muttered as she looked at Nelkipa that had now turned bright.

“...We will win, right?”

“...”

The five other N-levels stayed silent.

They didn’t know as well.

These shouts should only come out when their nation, the <Neropa Union>, actually won the war.

They didn’t know anything about this giant creature as well.

Despite all their research.

At that moment—

—beep! beep!—

The sounds of an alarm were ringing out throughout the entire armored vehicle.

“Huh? I can detect some strange energy outside!”

“What the hell... How can lightning shoot up from the ground!”

A magical sight.

And at that moment—

‘...Could it be those monkeys?’

That extremely violent and empty-headed race.

“That bastard!... Prepare to counter!”

N-Maria clenched her teeth as she thought of those apes that called themselves ‘transcendents’.

Chapter 347 : Inhabitants (2)

‘Him?’

Their leader, N-Maria, gritted her teeth as she looked at the thin man on the screen.

She remembered that face.

One of the B-levels had saved him when he was on the verge of death.

Although it had been awhile since he’d last been here, she still remembered that man and that B-level being all lovey-dovey.

But now he was repaying his debt by bringing an enemy to their door?

‘How did he find it?’

N-Maria wondered how that man had found the vehicle they hid with the latest technology from Ankara, but soon stopped.

That wasn’t important right now.

M-Waves—a power that only their planet’s soldiers could wield.

Those very M-Waves were blasting out from the bodies of the two standing before them.

The filters scanning the waves were going crazy.

These guys weren’t ordinary.

Those two beings.

Especially the man standing next to that lanky, pretty boy.

They were definitely considered as ‘transcendents’ amongst those things.

The ones who were especially dangerous and violent.

‘F***.’

N-Maria quickly made a decision as she looked at the storm of

lightning that his body released.

“Fire the cannons!”

“Understood!”

—kiiiing!—

The sole soldier of the N levels, N-Martin.

M-Waves started emanating from N-Martin’s body.

Then—

The weapon on top of the vehicle, <Catastrophe>, moved according to N-Martin’s wishes.

The weapon of war that the Neropa Union took pride in, the weapon that only their soldiers could use.

They had managed to escape in the past all thanks to this weapon.

“Sir Martin! Strike them!”

“Kill that bastard too!”

While the others shouted in excitement—

—there was one person who worriedly watched the scene.

‘Jack...’

Standing in the back, a woman watched them with an expression filled with distress.

.....

—kiiiing—

A storm was brewing up in the air.

Jack gulped as he looked at the swirls of energy that was starting to surround the armored car.

‘Damn...’

He’d forsaken his saviors and had betrayed them.

He'd done it by using the hidden ability within his trait, the ability to find women he'd once been intimate with.

Of course, these people would no longer welcome him after what he'd just done.

‘No. There’s one exception.’

The woman who had saved him.

Jack mumbled as he thought of the woman he had charmed in the past, B-Anasen.

That woman might still hold him dear.

But what did that matter?

The B-levels were one of the lowest levels in their society.

If the N-levels wanted his head to fly off, then they could only comply.

“...Can I leave yet? I’ve guided you here.”

Of course, he wasn’t just going to leave.

Since he would die amidst the flaming attacks falling down from the sky.

Kiriel smiled as she said:

“What are you saying? Hold your position.”

“Ugh...”

‘I knew this would happen. This is why I wanted to hide my trait...’

While Jack cursed in his mind—

—kiiiiing—

—the brewing storm amassed and a giant shockwave rang out.

Then—

—boooom!—

A tremendous amount of energy that could bend even space itself started gathering into a sphere.

A sphere that enveloped Hansoo and Kiriel.

Zzzzzzzttt!

The sphere was around 10 meters in width when it first surrounded Hansoo and Kiriel and then it rapidly started to shrink. shrink.

—swoosh!—

Everything within the sphere, even Nelkipa's skin, started to get sucked into its center.

“Ahhhh!”

Though they had aimed it at the two, its range was so large that it even impacted Jack.

And while Jack screamed as the force pulled him into the sphere — “Hmm.”

—Hansoo frowned for a moment, and then grasped the center of the sphere with both hands.

—scrrrrrttt!—

The gray sphere, which had been devouring everything in its range, let out a huge noise as it froze.

—kkkkkkkttttt!—

The gray sphere tried to devour the two hands holding onto it, but the hands remained unaffected.

Hansoo pushed around the sphere as he looked at Kiriel.

“Indeed, we won't need a weapon.”

“Shall we smash it apart then?”

“No, let's just stop it for now.”

The fang in Kiriel's hands cut across the air, slicing the gray

sphere into two.

And Hansoo threw the hammer in his right hand towards the armored car that had been preparing to run away.

—zzzztztzzzt!!!—

Tendrils of lightning branched out from the point of impact and quickly covered the entire armored car.

.....

“Don’t glare at me like that. I’m here to talk.”

“...Sure. Of course, you are.”

N-Maria sarcastically replied, glaring at the three people who invaded their armored vehicle.

‘Damn, we can’t even run anymore.’

The opponent was way stronger than expected.

Even though the weapon on this vehicle was meant for defensive purposes, it didn’t even put a scratch on them.

‘...’

N-Maria sighed as she looked at the soldier, N-Martin, who was looking down at the ground in embarrassment.

“Fine, let’s talk. What do you want?”

Although the man had stopped them from leaving, he had controlled his strength from overly damage their vehicle.

The barrier was still active, which meant that they were still hidden.

Of course, there weren’t any casualties as well.

Which meant that this man wasn’t planning on harming them.

Not yet, at least.

So a conversation with them wouldn’t be that bad, it was what they had come for anyway.

‘...Still. What a mongrel.’

While N-Maria frowned at Jack—

—Hansoo shrugged his shoulders.

“Simple, I came to ask for help.”

N-Maria continued to frown and shook her head.

It didn’t seem like they’d be very helpful when he was already this strong.

“This is not an armory. We have no weapons powerful enough to be of use to you. The weapon you just went against? That’s the strongest one we have.”

Hansoo shook his head.

“No, I don’t want a weapon. I want a shield.”

“...Shield?’

Hansoo nodded.

“Yes, please apply the repulsion coating on us.”

Kiriel’s expression brightened up.

‘Yes, with that...’

The biggest reason they couldn't fight freely was because of those flaming pillars raining down from above.

A moment’s hesitation or one wrong move could turn her and Hansoo into fried chicken.

But if they could get the repulsion coating that those cyborgs had, the story would change.

They would be able to fight freely.

N-Maria started to think.

‘...Should I?’

If they did apply it to them, these people would become

invulnerable to the Photon Strikes.

The coating didn't come off easily either.

She didn't know where this man stood between Angkara and Melchizedek, but they would be gaining extremely powerful shields.

But she didn't think about it for too long.

Maria fell into silence as she stared at Hansoo's eyes.

'...We need to at least survive.'

She didn't know what his objectives were.

But she had a hunch.

That he didn't have the time or leisure to care about her people's situation.

It would be better to apply the coating quickly and then shoo them away.

Even if she were reprimanded under the laws of the union for giving aid to an alien race, it would be worth it.

"We'll do it, but you'll have to wait. It takes a bit of time to prepare the coating."

They could prepare it faster if they were at the Main Research Center or the Armory. There was a limit to what they could achieve in an armored vehicle that was built for research purposes.

After the A-levels started to prep the coating, N-Maria bit her lip as she said: "I have one condition."

"What is it?"

"Please do not cause harm to my race while you're here."

Hansoo nodded.

He wasn't planning to anyway.

There was no real benefit in fighting them.

N-Maria's confidence rose after seeing Hansoo's reaction, and she added another condition.

"Also, please leave after this."

But Hansoo shook his head.

"No can do."

N-Maria started to frown and Hansoo continued.

"Just listen, it won't be that bad for you guys."

While N-Maria's expression turned to one of confusion— — boooom!—

'What the...?'

N-Maria frowned as the entire vehicle shook from the impact.

One of the B-levels operating the sensors shouted.

"They've tracked us down!"

"Damn..."

N-Maria frowned at the screen.

Countless robotic foot soldiers.

'Melchizedek, that lunatic. What the hell are you planning...?'

N-Maria gritted her teeth as she looked at the half-robot, half-human being standing behind the foot soldiers.

N-Maria clenched her hands into a fist as she stared at the countless robots who were charging through the flames as if they'd all been applied with the repulsion coating.

Having once talked to the kind and friendly Melchizedek in the past, she would've never expected it to do something like this.

'Well, if he was violent from the beginning then the alliance and betrayal would have never occurred.'

N-Maria mumbled to herself as she looked at the charging robots shown on the screen.

Apparently they'd detected their vehicle in the short moment their barrier had collapsed from the previous attack.

N-Maria glared at the two intruders and gritted her teeth.

"They've managed to track us down thanks to you guys. At least fight for u..."

—boom!—

Even before Maria could complete her sentence, a huge shockwave caused the entire vehicle to shake.

"The outer shield has been damaged! They're rushing us!"

"Dammit! Defend! Don't let it break! N-Martin! Activate the weapon!"

They would be destroyed at this rate.

N-Maria quickly issued orders as she stared at Melchizedek's forces.

But, the Catastrophe wasn't being activated.

"What are you doing, N-Martin! Activate it immediately!"

At N-Maria's shouts, N-Martin, who had been in a daze, woke up from his stupor and began to let out his M-waves.

All while continuing to steal glances.

'...'

N-Martin glared at the two intruders.

Chapter 348 : Inhabitants (3)

‘...Damn.’

—rumble—

N-Maria felt the faint vibrations through the walls of the corridor inside the armored vehicle.

This vehicle was heading towards a certain direction.

Towards the Main Research Center—the origin of all these traitorous robots.

They had made this decision after listening to the man’s words.

‘I’m still not sure if this is a good idea.’

N-Maria had just settled the intruders into their rooms and was just on the way back to her own room.

She frowned as she thought back to the scene when the foot soldiers had tracked them down.

<Since I’m the reason this happened, I’ll deal with it.> The man who called himself Kang Hansoo walked out, looking at the screen that was showing scenes from the outside.

With just a hammer in his head.

She had scoffed at him for walking out with an ancient weapon—one that even they wouldn’t be able to find in their museums—to fight against thousands of Melchizedek’s forces.

But her smile soon froze.

She’d witnessed the battle between him and Melchizedek’s army.

‘...’

N-Maria shook her head and pinched the air.

To replay that earlier scene.

—tiriririk—

A translucent panel appeared in the air and started to replay the video of the fight below.

—boom! boom! boom! boom!—

—rumble!—

—clank—

With every swipe of his hand, he threw hundreds of robots away.

With every swing of his hammer, he destroyed Melchizedek's powerful elite soldiers.

N-Maria continued to stare at the man who wielded lightning and flames to single-handedly destroy the entire army.

This was the fourth time.

She had replayed it four times on the way back, but it was still hard to believe.

“Ugh...”

‘Is that even something a single being can achieve?’

That strength would be hard to find, even back on their original planet.

Even more so if it was achieved without the backing of technology or civilization.

The M-waves emitted by their soldiers was used to control weapons, not to actually destroy things like this.

‘No, there might be something in the military that can rival him.’

She thought of the battleships from Angkara but soon shook her head.

Of course, she had to admit what she had to.

The man was disgustingly powerful.

In their current armyless situation, this man's strength would be of extreme help.

So the offer the man had made to them was truly enticing.

<I will help you, and you will help me. Help me take over the Main Research Center. You guys can have full control of it afterward.> To have control over the Main Research Center.

An alluring offer.

The giant train-shaped Main Research Center wasn't simply a research center.

All the robots that had attacked and chased them down had all been created from the Plant attached to the research center.

Most of the topics researched on Angkara were about the robots used for battle, and these had to be tested for their efficiency and strength.

Of course, it wasn't as good as the Armory attached to the newest research centers, but it was still something.

'If we can acquire that... it'll be of great help.'

This man had probably asked them for this very reason as well.

Since the man wouldn't have the abilities required to control the research center.

N-Maria consoled herself.

'Yeah, it was a good decision.'

One needed a certain amount of power in a chaotic situation such as this.

Just like what had happened to them when they were up against Melchizedek's forces.

If they could obtain the research center, then it would be of tremendous help to them.

'I must go back.'

She could not die on top of a filthy beast such as this.

N-Maria continued to mumble to herself as she looked towards the giant planet that was her home, Angkara.

At that moment, sounds of footsteps could be heard from the end of the corridor.

‘Who?’

N-Maria tensed up and reached for her waist.

This corridor was the path leading to her personal room.

Normally, there shouldn’t be anybody else taking this path.

But N-Maria soon sighed in relief and dropped her hand.

“N-Martin? What’s the issue? I don’t plan on reprimanding you for what just happened, so just go back. Nobody can beat a monster like that.”

The only soldier within the armored vehicle.

Almost everybody liked this man because of his kind attitude and laid-back personality.

That was why his main duty was to just protect them.

Although he had indeed failed his job earlier, she wasn't planning to pursue it further.

Even if they had a small army to protect them, that monster of a man would’ve made his way through to her.

‘Is this because of those newcomers?’

That was possible.

It was her job to listen to her team's issues and to find a solution to their problems.

But as N-Maria was about to speak up with a smile.

N-Martin started cursing from the end of the corridor.

“You crazy b*tch. You actually put the repulsion coating on those aliens? That’s treason.”

“Huh...?”

He wasn't smiling.

N-Maria stared at N-Martin's cold expression, her own face darkening as well.

Though they were both N-levels, there was a difference of status.

“I can't just ignore that, and you'd better watch your words. You and I have a difference in status.”

“Status? Haha...”

N-Martin glared at N-Maria and clenched his teeth.

“You b*tch, you still haven't realized it yet?”

N-Maria started to feel uneasy.

Their planet, Angkara, was a planet of warriors.

Usually, the hierarchy was well-maintained, and they divided everybody's statuses accordingly. But there were certain situations when that could change.

Something that she, coming from the [Tetnorat branch](#) of the family, could not flip.

“Wait...”

“Yeah. This place is now under the direct control of the Kalkuroun Fleet. I will be the commanding officer from this point on.”

This was an absolute order.

Nobody from the Neropa Union could go against this order.

N-Martin showed a line of red words on his panel and announced: “For now, I'll let you maintain your authority here. Let's just continue like this.”

‘If the person in command were to suddenly change, they would suspect something.’

The red words read out: [Main fleet on the way. Maintain current status and await our arrival].

‘Barbarians.’

N-Martin mumbled to himself as he thought of the two intruders. The fleet of flames was on the way.

The powerful fleet that burned up planets and sliced moons apart.

Once it arrives then this aberration of a beast—as well as every bug on top of it—would be annihilated.

The strength of the union was not to be messed with.

But of course, he couldn’t just sit around until then.

It would go against the standards of the union’s army.

<A soldier must live up to their role. If you have no limbs, then bite them. If you have no teeth, then use your gums. Live for your people, die for your people>.

He, a soldier, could not just wait until the fleet arrived.

‘Things won’t work the way you want.’

N-Martin smiled as he thought of the two people who would be receiving the repulsion coating at this moment.

.....

—kiiiiing—

A research room within the giant armored vehicle.

Lights flashed within the giant vacuum flask as something was being assembled within it.

—chiiijjiik—

The fine powders assembled were sucked into two tubes attached to the flask.

—chijjik—

‘Good.’

Hansoo nodded as he looked at the nanoparticles they applied to his body.

Nanoparticles so tiny that he could barely even feel them on his skin.

But this thin coating was able to withstand any attack from the main planet Angkara.

It couldn't block a concentrated attack or a high-level weapon, but there was no chance that'd be attacked by such things, so this was good enough for now.

—chijjik—

The B-level female who handled the coating spoke to Hansoo.

“It will last for about two weeks. After that, the durability of the nanoparticles will cause them to start disintegrating. We'll reapply it when that happens, so don't worry so much.”

‘Two weeks, huh?’

Hansoo chuckled inwardly.

He knew that they could make these nanoparticles last forever as long they weren't physically destroyed.

But he also knew why they were making it last for two weeks. In the end, he decided not to question it.

‘They're probably holding onto it, so we don't betray them.’

If he could settle their differences with just this, then it wasn't that bad.

Though it was still a little annoying.

“I'm done. Wow... so this is what it feels like.”

Kiriel was extremely excited when they finished her coating.

‘Hansoo is still receiving it...’

Although she was tall for a woman, she had ended much earlier because she was still much smaller in comparison to Hansoo.

The most important parts had been covered already.

Heart, head, and spine.

Kiriell was shocked as she looked at Hansoo's body where the coating was now going over his back, stomach and his limbs.

‘Mmm...’

Though the injuries were healing at a rapid pace, he still had countless numbers of them.

She grew curious.

As to the number of hidden injuries Hansoo had beneath the regenerating flesh.

‘...If he didn't have his regenerative capabilities, then he'd be dead by now.’

Kiriell thought back to when Hansoo's entire body had burned up and frowned.

But she maintained her smile so Hansoo wouldn't know of her worries.

“So this is just like a tour until we reach the research center, right?”

Kiriell laughed as she looked around the room.

Of course, she and Hansoo would have to fight the moment they arrived.

Maybe even put their lives on the line.

But they could rest until then.

‘Prolonging the tension isn't good.’

Actually, they had seen a place where they could rest on their way here.

A place that looked like it was meant for researchers to rest after going through prolonged periods of research.

It wasn't good to relax too much, but taking a small break in preparation for the next battle had its advantages.

‘Good. Good.’

“Hey Hansoo, what food do you like the mos...”

Kiriel asked, deciding to treat this as a date, but...

—beeeeeeeep—

—beeeeeep—

“Huh?”

The person in charge of the coating suddenly looked at the machine in confusion.

‘What’s going on?’

—kiiiiing—

Red lights shone from the repulsion coating system, and the machine stopped moving even though it hadn't completed the application.

—chiiiiii—

“Ah... We haven’t finished it!”

“It won’t finish anyway, right?”

Hansoo smiled as he looked at the coating on his body that was peeling away.

‘This world... This is what I like about it.’

Everyone had made fun of him.

Saying that he might become lazy after going back into the past.

Some said that he was definitely going to become lazy when he returned to the past. After fighting against the races of the Abyss for so long, he'd be dealing with weaklings instead.

Some even pleaded for him to remember that they were fighting with their lives on the line, and told him to hurry his way up.

To limit his sightseeing.

But it seemed like there was no need for him to worry.

This world didn't give him a second to take a break.

'I wonder who it could be?'

Of course, he had a person in mind.

The soldier who had stared at him in disgust.

But wouldn't that be too obvious?

Hansoo smiled coldly as he looked between the giant train on the panel and the small area he was standing on.

Seems to be a branch of family maybe.

Chapter 349 : Entering (1)

—rumble—

Hansoo looked at the giant train in the distance, then asked Kiriell, who was standing next to him: “You’ve finished the preparations?”

“Yes.”

Kiriell started looking worriedly between the giant train and the corridors around her as she mumbled: ‘I read it with my Psychometry, but... didn’t find any traces.’

Her Psychometry wasn’t all-powerful.

If the suspect wasn’t present on the scene, it was hard to figure things out.

The only people who could suddenly stop the repulsion-coating system were the N-levels.

And they could do it from anywhere within the armored vehicle, so there weren’t any traces for her to find.

Even if she looked them over one-by-one, it would still be a huge issue.

They controlled this whole thing through brainwaves.

Although she could see a person’s actions and hear them speak, she could not read minds.

‘Should we just flip this over? Hold them down one-by-one?’

They’d easily spit it out if she tortured them.

But Kiriell signed out.

‘That’s not something we can do to an ally.’

Right now, she and Hansoo needed their strength.

And it would be the same for the inhabitants of Ankara.

Kiriel saw N-Maria walking hurriedly towards the two of them with a worried expression.

“Are you really okay? The coating's not finished...”
N-Maria looked at Hansoo's body.

He'd trained his body to the point of looking beast-like.

But N-Maria, the one who had invented the repulsion coating, could see the holes in the coating.

In a situation where one would still feel uneasy even after smothering oneself with the coating, the sorry state of the coating on Hansoo's body weighed heavily on her mind.

‘Hmm... Is she pretending?’

Whether she was really worried.

Or pretending to worry.

Kiriel glared at N-Maria.

Hansoo chuckled as he said:

“You said that it would take two more weeks to fully prepare again, right? Then... those things will likely double in number.”

There were numerous methods if they had the time, the materials, and the manpower.

But they were lacking in all three aspects at this moment.

N-Maria looked in the direction Hansoo had pointed towards and fell silent.

‘Mmm...’

The artificial transcendents that withstood against the flaming pillars that were falling down from the sky.

And the tens of thousands of robot soldiers that marched in rows in front of the giant train.

Even now, a countless number of these soldiers were being

created and sent out from inside the train.

It looked as if they were preparing to meet a special guest.

‘...Melchizedek, you’re really going overboard now.’

N-Maria clenched her teeth as she looked at the soldiers.

Melchizedek was no longer laying low and was openly going against them now.

If this monster they were standing on arrived at the Neropa Union, then all these soldiers and artificial transcendents would descend onto Ankara.

‘And if they take over the Plant...’

The problem would become even worse.

‘No, I must stop it.’

N-Maria started to tremble.

Did she come all the way to this isolated place just to lament about her fate?

She had to change this.

For him.

‘B-Kellan...’

N-Maria mumbled someone’s name and then looked towards Hansoo.

“So...while you breach through their defenses, you want us to sneak inside and take over the control center, right?”

Hansoo nodded.

“Yes.”

The enemy’s forces had mainly split into two groups.

The small elite, which comprised the artificial transcendents.

And the mass-produced soldiers.

The former would be hard to take over, but the latter was a different story.

If they could connect this armored research vehicle, <Melkasus>, to the control center, then they would succeed.

And of course, they had the ability to.

‘Haa...’

The look in N-Maria’s eyes changed; they were now much more focused and filled with resolution.

“Let’s begin then.”

“Good.”

As soon as Hansoo replied—

SSSSSS...

—red smoke began to surround Hansoo’s body.

.....

Lightning crashed down from the clouds.

—rumble!—

Countless cracks appeared on the ground.

With the swing of a hammer, lightning blew dozens of soldiers away, like leaves in front of a powerful gale.

—whooosh—

Red smoke spread out and entered the bodies of the artificial transcents.

—szzzzzt—

—crack!—

As the artificial transcents slumped forward, their skin melting down and their bones shattering from inside, two more flaming pillars fell down from the sky and swept over Hansoo and everyone around him.

—boooooom!—

Though the red smoke was a skill, it was still made up of organisms in the end.

Because the organisms hadn't received the repulsion coating and had no resistance to fire, they stuttered for a bit when the flaming pillar struck down.

The artificial transcendents jumped into the fire as if they were taking a shower, and then started to charge at Hansoo again.

To crush his head in.

Hansoo stood in the center and smiled at the artificial transcendents charging towards him, his skin still burning.

The photon strikes and the attacks of the artificial transcendents.
As well as the numerous foot soldiers.

An attack that would have been a threat to him in the past.

But now, Hansoo only laughed as he swung his hammer.

'Even if the coating is incomplete... it's still useful.'

—boooooom!—

Hansoo's right arm smacked away the artificial transcendents, and they crashed into the foot soldiers behind them and rolled into a ball together.

In the small gap he had created after blowing them away, Hansoo raised his hammer to the sky.

Kakagagaka!

Five dragons extended out from his heart and started to compress themselves above the hammer.

—boooooooooooooom!—

When the blackened Mjolnir smashed the ground at Hansoo's feet, it created a shockwave never seen before now.

Even Nelkipa's bright skin, which hadn't reacted to anything else other than the photon strikes, had hardened in just a moment.

Nelkipa's skin, which looked like it was about to break apart, quickly crystallized as it repelled the force of the Nine Dragons Spear, no, the Nine Dragons Strike.

A good turn of events for Hansoo.

—boobooboooom!—

The repelled force rose back up and smashed the countless soldiers surrounding Hansoo.

Hundreds of soldiers turned into dust in an instant, and it even shredded apart two artificial transcendents as well.

And N-Maria watched this entire scene in a dumbfounded daze.

‘What in the world...’

The strength of that attack was slightly stronger than even the main attacks from a mid-sized cruiser.

Only a select few of Angkara's ships had the rights to control Angkara's <Flames>, and for this man to be able to wield a power stronger than that with only his body...

But N-Maria quickly regained her senses and shouted: “Charge at them!”

The B and A-levels, who were also watching this scene in a daze, woke up and started to focus on their work as well.

And soon, the giant armored vehicle <Melkasus> charged through the path that Hansoo had created, towards the giant research center in the distance.

—brrrrrr!—

‘This is seriously just insane...’

N-Maria clenched her teeth.

Though she had executed the plan because she had to, actually

experiencing the situation was a whole other thing.

She had never expected to get mixed up with such a stupid plan in her life.

Though Hansoo was clearing the way in the front, the enemy still had a tremendous number of forces left.

Plus, countless artillery fires and the flaming pillars continuously rained down from above.

—boooooom!—

—tink! tonk!—

The Melkasus shook as it charged through the masses of robots and artillery strikes.

“Remaining shield amount is 87.3%! The 3rd and 4th fusion reactors are becoming overloaded!”

“Catastrophe activated!... Damn! One artificial transcendent has attached itself to the vehicle!”

Kigigigigik!

Sparks flew through tiny gaps that were cut away from the roof of the vehicle as something started to crawl through it.

A very simple-looking blade.

N-Maria was at a loss as this extremely average-looking blade bore through what should be the latest and most advanced technology of Ankara.

How was this even possible?

Anyway, if that thing were to actually break into the vehicle, then it would be a catastrophe.

They only had a single soldier among them.

If that thing managed to crawl inside, then they'd all be massacred.

As N-Maria looked at the slowly moving blade.

—booom!—

They heard a loud sound above the vehicle, and the blade disappeared.

As if it had been flung away along with its owner.

“I’ll deal with these things, so just focus on driving!”

A beautiful voice, unfitting for this battlefield, came from above.

‘Right... we had one more.’

N-Maria mumbled as she heard that voice.

She saw the battle around the vehicle and calmed down.

‘Amazing.’

One man was charging through a giant army.

Through the artillery shells.

Swinging his weapon from left to right.

At first, she’d thought that this mission would require some form of heavenly luck, but not anymore.

If that man continued to pave the way like this, and Kiriell, the woman, defended them...

At the same time, something weighed down on her mind.

‘...N-Martin.’

N-Martin, as if he had sensed N-Maria’s gaze, used his brain waves to send her a message.

<You see, right? Look how dangerous that race is. Imagine if they were to land on Angkara.> ‘...’

Since she could utilize her brain waves to send messages, N-Maria simply listened.

N-Martin continued.

<You probably think that Melchizedek is the dangerous one, right? In my eyes, those things are even more dangerous.> And N-Martin's words weren't unreasonable.

Melchizedek was strong; this was the truth.

But it was still an AI in the end.

They knew a lot about it, and it knew a lot about them.

Which meant that the only thing remaining between them was a battle of strengths.

And in N-Martin's opinion, Ankara would not lose on that front.

But these aliens were different.

They were creatures shrouded in mystery.

They could train their M-Waves to the point of smashing apart spaceships.

The scarier thing was... this was not their limit.

N-Martin knew.

He knew that above that powerful man...

There were even stronger people.

He had seen it.

<Hahaha! This is a soldier? How laughable.> 'Damn it... You haven't even seen our true strength.'

N-Martin grit his teeth as he thought of those two monsters currently somewhere on Nelkipa.

He couldn't let them get to Ankara.

He had to stop them here.

But N-Martin woke up from his thoughts.

They had already arrived at the giant train, the Main Research Center.

—ooooooooong!—

“We’re going in!”

Along with N-Maria’s shout—

—Melkasus charged through the hole that Hansoo had created at the giant train’s side.

Into the darkness.

Chapter 350 : Entering (2)

—boom!—

Hansoo smashed through a wall and looked around.

‘Not much here, at least in this area.’

—rumble—

Hansoo checked his body as he walked into the giant train.

The Immortal Soul seemed to have grown a bit—it was healing his body at a faster rate than before.

—boom!—

As Melkasus charged through the entrance, Hansoo started to swing his hammer again towards the robots that followed it inside.

—boom!—

Despite the countless numbers being flung outside the train by Hansoo, they continued to rush in as if they had expected all of this.

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders as he watched this scene.

‘I need to bait them...’

The robot’s target was not him, but rather, the vehicle behind him.

—boom! boom!—

It was clear as the artillery shells were focused onto the vehicle.

‘Did they realize I was heading towards the control tower?’

He couldn't handle the hundreds of shells that were flying towards the vehicle with his strength alone.

—boom!—

And those exact artillery shells were slowly chipping away at the vehicle’s shield.

‘No, this won’t do.’

Hansoo frowned.

Red clouds started to seep out from his body and surrounded the area around Melkasus.

Then—

crack. ssss...

The artillery shells all started melting whilst passing through the mere few tens of meters of red clouds.

—tink!—

—tonk! tink!—

The artillery shells melted away as only a few of the remaining fragments slammed into the vehicle.

‘Good.’

The flaming pillars didn’t reach this place.

His pandemic blade would not be weakened anymore.

Through a small communicator near his ear, Hansoo asked,
<Which direction?>

They needed to take over the control tower first, then they would be free from the artillery fire.

<We’ll go up front so protect us.>

<Sure.>

‘Anyway... Where did they get these transcendents?’

There might be a lot of one-star transcendents, but not this many.

Even if all the one-star transcendents were caught and modified, this number was simply too large.

‘Well, we’ll know after taking over the control tower.’

<Let's g—>

But even before he could finish his words, —swoosh!—

An extremely condensed aura exploded out from the end of the train.

A bloodthirsty aura.

Hansoo frowned at the prickly sensation on his skin.

N-Maria shouted from inside Melkasus.

<We can only move if you defend us!> N-Maria grinded her teeth at the countless robots that continued to charge in.

Without the red cloud, they would become bare to the artillery shells again, and the robots would charge in as well.

They needed to take over the control tower as quick as possible, so why was he just standing there?

<Kiriel, defend them. Go to the central control center with the vehicle.> <What about you?>

Hansoo looked over into the depths of the train.

<Somebody has invited me, I must go.> Kiriel frowned.

‘Huh?’

There must be a reason why Hansoo spoke those words.

Kiriel elevated her senses to the limits to check.

—prick prick—

‘...!!!’

Kiriel subconsciously clenched her hands at the dense aura that was radiating towards them like blades.

‘If that thing came to us...’

Kiriel spoke to Hansoo.

<Let me come too.>

<What the... What are you doing? We need to take over the control tower! Are you neglecting our alliance?> N-Martin's annoyed voice could be heard from inside.

If one left, fine.

But if both of them did?

What was he supposed to do then?

There was no way they'd get to the control tower without them.

'These guys, they really are stupid. They don't even know their priorities.'

But while N-Martin was grinding his teeth, Kiriel's cold voice rang through the communicator.

<Shut up.>

She didn't care if everyone else died.

She was only helping them out because Hansoo told her to.

But that aura.

That aura was different.

Though she believed in Hansoo, that being was not simple.

Of course she would choose to follow Hansoo.

However, Hansoo spoke as he shook his head.

<No, you need to stay with them.>

<Good, at least one of you has a brain.> One of the five N levels spoke up.

Though he looked like he was lacking a bit in comparison to N-Maria or N-Martin, he must be an N level because he had the abilities.

'...This kid.'

Kiriel clenched her fists even tighter as she said, <Fine. Come back safely.>

Hansoo nodded, raised the hammer up high, and then commanded, <Go.>

—boooooooooom!—

The floor beneath them exploded out with lightning as a vehicle and a humanoid shadow flew out from the smoke clouds, running in different directions.

.....

—rumble—

Hansoo frowned as he continued to run inwards.

‘...I wonder what the rest are doing.’

Hansoo made an annoyed expression.

Why was he doing this?

Neither Clementine or any of his comrades could be seen.

Of course, he couldn’t just ignore this.

If he, who knew of the future, let things go, then things might really go awry.

‘There are those who refuse to listen as well.’

Hansoo thought of the Angkara as he continued to run towards the aura.

This guy was top priority.

‘Let’s see what you are.’

Hansoo smashed through the walls of the research center and ran towards it in a straight line.

Though breaking the complex-looking machines felt like something he shouldn’t be doing, there was no time to waste.

‘They’ll fix it.’

This was why he was with Angkara’s people.

Then—

—zooooom!—

It was from the depths of the research center.

‘...Heh.’

Hansoo smashed his legs onto the floor as he stared at the golden beam that was rushing towards him.

The photon strike.

He never expected to see it in here.

Of course, it was much more condensed than the ones that were outside.

Hansoo smashed the beam upwards with his hammer.

—boom!—

The beam flew into the air, breaking through countless layers of the research center and into the sky.

“What a nice introduction.”

—stomp stomp—

Something walked out from the dark.

It was a sturdy man with a defined jawline.

Hansoo frowned.

‘Melchizedek...’

Then, something also followed it out from behind.

Unlike Melchizedek, who wasn’t armed, this new being was armed to the teeth.

A giant cannon was cooling off behind its back.

‘A personal weapon that can fire the photon strike... Hmm.’

It was a cannon that allowed one to use the photon strike which could only be used by military bases or starships.

Of course, this wasn't common.

According to his knowledge, only the R-levels had the right to use this special, personal defense mechanism, even in Angkara.

It was a weapon used by the royalties who ruled Angkara.

Melchizedek smiled at Hansoo.

[A gift. It was really hard to catch this thing, you know.]

Melchizedek smiled as he touched the surface of the cannon behind the man's back.

.....

—clank!—

“Is it here?”

N-Maria answered,

<Yes, once you pass through this it'll be the control tower!> —
kiiiing!—

Catastrophe, which was on top of the vehicle, started creating a large, gray ball.

—crackle!—

The ball was forming on the wall as it started to tear the wall apart, creating a path for them to pass through.

Shockingly, the gray ball was forced to disintegrate as strange energy flew through the wall.

‘What!?’

N-Maria was shocked by this scene.

‘Ugh.’

Kiriell made signs and activated a skill.

Then—

A strange shockwave spread out from her body and caused

everything around her to stop functioning.

‘...What? I’m not even frozen!’

N-Martin, despite being fully awake, could not move his body at all.

Kiriel glanced at them and then smashed her fist at the wall.

—boom!—

Cracks appeared on the wall as a small rectangular hole was made.

Kiriel spoke after she created the hole.

“The smaller the entrance, the easier it is to guard. Only take the people you really need and go in, I’ll guard this place.”

N-Maria saw the robots who were starting to move again and then quickly started to get off the vehicle.

They had basic body modifications already, jumping down from the tall vehicle wasn’t much.

—thunk!—

Kiriel made a confused expression at this scene.

Not many had come out.

“Only you few? What about the other N-levels?”

Kiriel thought of the other four in the vehicle.

“I’m the only one from Technorat, just guard us well!”

Kiriel smiled at N-Maria who was running through the hole and then glanced at the vehicle.

She could penetrate them right through the walls.

‘I guess I should clean up the cockroaches when I get the chance.’

She didn’t like them already.

And they weren’t needed.

She created four flaming spears in her hand.

Then—

—swoosh!—

Four holes appeared on the walls of the vehicle.

Chapter 351 : Entering (3)

N-Rondart Ron looked at N-Maria walking away and asked N-Martin: “Is this okay? Martin? Can we survive like this?”

“...”

N-Martin stayed silent from N-Rondart Ron’s question.

One female standing next to them, N-Karian Nell, exploded with rage and grabbed onto N-Martin’s collars.

“You bastard! You told us to trust you! We stopped the coating because you told us to! We even lent you the codes! But what is this? This is all you can achieve? Do you not care about your life in Angkara?”

N-Karian Nell’s rage continued on.

Although they were all N-levels, they were acting quite rudely towards N-Martin.

Against N-Martin, who supposedly held full authority in this current war situation.

But, of course...

Their birth statuses were different.

“...Royalty.”

N-Martin mumbled to himself.

The soldiers were above the Mekaniks and Technorats.

But they were still below the royalty.

The ones who ruled Angkara.

The sons and daughters of the R-levels.

Unlike most who started off at the C level and spent their lives never ranking above the B or A-levels, these sons and daughters inherited the position of N-level, the level above the As.

On the surface, they were at the same level.

But no.

As long as they continued to live, sooner or later they would become R-levels.

They were born to such a fate.

Unlike him and the others, who could never reach such a level in their lifetime.

There was a reason why they were so angry at this moment.

Since they would've come here with just the simple mindset of 'touring' or 'exploring.'

N-Martin thought of N-Maria as he said:

"Don't worry. Everything is flowing perfectly."

"...Yeah? This is flowing perfectly? Did you not see that bastard suspect us?"

N-Karian Nell thought of the two barbarians as she raged on.

Two stupid beings that had the powers of a high-ranked soldier of Angkara, the personal royal guards among the top-tier hierarchy in their society.

Especially the eyes of the woman, those eyes that looked at them in disgust.

This alone was unsettling, but there was a huge army charging in from behind as well.

'Bastards... I'm going to smash you down to the bottommost rungs of society once I get back.'

N-Karian Nell swore to herself that once she got back, she would punish N-Maria and N-Martin by making their lives as miserable as she could.

There was a basic reason why they'd come here.

It was for a mining center under the absolute control of the AI, Melchizedek.

If they succeeded, they would gain the rights to the secret of Nelkipa.

No risk, high returns.

N-Martin would fight, and N-Maria would research, and the rest would just take the credit.

In return, they would make both their futures a bit easier to tread.

But there was no reason to anymore.

N-level?

Once they returned, they would probably end up demoted to C-level, or even a D-level, the level of a criminal.

Because they had driven her into such danger.

For failing to serve a person of royalty properly.

N-Martin smiled sadly as he gazed at N-Karian's expression.

He then looked at the sky.

'B-Cornell.'

He had stacked merits for 30 years in the military to climb up to this point.

To give his son, a C-level, the chance to live a slightly better life.

To drag his son up to B-level.

But this was the end.

The crazy dogs in front of his eyes had the power to disintegrate his 30 years of effort into nothing with a snap of their fingers.

The monstrous aliens outside had the strength to destroy the land he'd defended for 30 years.

The land which his son would live on.

In all honesty, it wasn't anybody else's fault.

This was all decided the moment Melchizedek betrayed them, and he had failed to take these three to escape.

So he needed to deal with this himself.

'...N-Maria. Please.'

At that moment, he heard N-Maria's voice from his communications device by his ear.

<...N-Martin. I've done as you said. You told me that...the others are not needed.> N-Martin smiled brightly as he heard this.

<Good job. N-Maria, I leave the rest to you. This is the end of the road for us...> "You bastard! Speak! How da—"

As N-Rondart Ron started to shout alongside N-Karian Nell.

—pa pa pa pak—

Four distinct sounds rang out from the walls of the armored vehicle.

And all from four bodies.

"Kuhuk..."

"Argh... What...what is this...?"

N-Rondart and the other three didn't realize what just happened as they looked at the holes made through their hearts.

And N-Martin too.

Well.

N-Martin at least knew that this would happen sooner or later.

'Kiriel...was that her name? Well. You and I are quite similar in many respects..."

The only difference was that he would fight until the end for his nation.

And she would do it for her man.

N-Martin smiled as he looked at the hole burning with flames that prevented the nano machine's tissue reconstruction.

He'd completed his job.

Kiriel was indeed skillful.

Nobody could survive this.

Not him, or the other three.

Nice and clean.

'Thank you...'

The rest was now up to N-Maria.

N-Martin looked towards the research center's control room where N-Maria would be at by now, his vision starting to blur.

.....

—chiiijijik—

'...'

N-Maria clenched her teeth as she sensed the brainwave communication had stopped.

'This crazy girl... She killed them instantly?'

N-Maria was at a loss.

Of course, she knew that Kiriel didn't like them to begin with and had been enraged when the Hansoo's repulsion coating had stopped midway.

But she didn't expect that Kiriel, the quiet and respectful girl, would act out like this in an instant.

N-Maria thought of N-Martin's final words before she left...

<You, who lived your entire life as a Technorat wouldn't know. But I, I've lived and rolled through battlefields my entire life. I know something you don't. Those guys, they're not from a civilized society like us. They're closer to soldiers... No, not even

soldiers. They're simply barbarians. Beings who have become evil and selfish for the sole purpose of growing stronger.> <No...>

N-Martin continued to push her and gave her the option to choose.

<If you really cannot believe me, then I'll give you a choice. Try telling them that the rest of us are not needed and see what happens. If I die right away, then... do as I told you.> 'Martin... your words were right.'

N-Maria clenched her teeth as she took over the controls for the research center.

It was just as Martin had said.

Those things looked lightly at life and wouldn't let a single trace of potential danger remain.

And they had the strength to back their views.

'...I cannot leave them be.'

N-Maria's pace hastened.

—tatatatata—

"Hurry and infiltrate it! Stop all forms of outside communication and deal with the core detection system!"

"Ugh... Yes!"

Even without her orders, the other members were putting all their efforts into hacking the system from fear.

The sounds of explosions coming from outside were getting louder.

—boom!—

—boooooom!—

—crack!—

The sounds of explosions and what seemed like sounds of

machines parts breaking apart were getting closer and louder.

If they didn't want those exact sounds to happen to their own bodies, they had to hack this as soon as possible.

And their efforts did not betray them.

—ooooooooooooong!—

They heard the loud sounds of machinery as the giant main control board changed from red to blue.

—tunk! tunktunktunk! tonk!—

The sounds of machinery shutting down and booting up continued as areas with Melchizedek's red color all changed to blue.

“Hahaha! Success!”

“Phew! N-Maria! We'll hand over authority to you!”

The various B-levels and A-levels all transferred their authority to N-Maria.

They just needed to take control of the robots.

This was good enough.

If they could take over the entire research center and their forces, then they would be able to reverse the situation and finish this all off.

“Please hurry, N-Maria!”

The B and A-levels all shouted at N-Maria as the loud sounds from outside drew closer and closer.

But N-Maria ignored their desperate shouts.

<...Kalkuroun Fleet. Request for Access.> Then— —kiiiiing—

The communications system that Melchizedek had stopped began to start up again.

And soon N-Maria could hear a voice in her head.

<...Nelkipa Team. N-Martin, in charge of 7th mining center. Access granted.> <...More information required. N-Karian Nell... Code accessed. Access granted.> <...Beginning communications.>

—kiiiiiiiing—

An image appeared inside N-Maria's head.

Of a man who stood with a giant starship in the background.

N-Maria gulped as she looked at the oppressive-looking man.

'R-Koronaita Nell.'

A man from one of the three main families that controlled the Neropa Union, the Nell family.

He who was acknowledged for his abilities and given the rights to control the fleet of flames, the Kalkuroun.

<How dare an N-level activate an emergency call... and using our family's secret code, too.> N-Maria breathed in and out as she listened to R-Koronaita Nell's words.

'Martin, I have come to this point.'

She had taken over the research center and opened up the military communications server.

It was now time to act on Martin's plan, using the deaths of the other four as the basis.

To take over everything.

'What are you doing!? N-Maria! Please suppress the robots!'

N-Maria continued to focus on the communications and ignored their shouts.

'There's not enough spare energy to control them...'

<This is the Main Research Center. If we activate everything here, then we'll be able to release the 2nd level limits for 0.13 seconds and activate the Quantum Transmission. We request aid from an elite force equipped with the Dragon God gear.> <Huh? Do

you think the Dragon God force is a common soldier? You don't have the authority to request such a thing.> 'F***ing bastard...'

N-Maria gritted her teeth.

For him to downright ignore her request...

N-Maria breathed in and out and then continued to speak to N-Koronaita Nell.

<Currently, three members from the Nell, Ron, and Pael families are in danger of losing their lives to the alien race. The member responsible for protecting us, N-Martin, is dead. We require assistance immediately.> <...What did you say?>

R-Koronaita Nell's expression froze.

'It's all over now, you b****.'

N-Maria thought of Kiriel as she smiled.

.....

"Oh? They took over the controls, is that okay? To hand over authority for this giant research center directly to them?"

Melchizedek, who seemed to be relying quite heavily on the guard next to him, laughed as he detected what just happened.

This giant research center's size was that of three cities, and it had a fusion reactor that could power all three cities for half a century.

Of course, the other buildings and facilities would have such a thing as well.

All facilities in Ankara were ready for an emergency situation.

There were two main purposes for this research center.

Researching the tools to be used in battles...

And for transferring such forces.

Through Quantum Transmission.

It was a result of the countless years of effort from Angkara's war union.

But Hansoo chuckled.

“Well, as long as they release your lock. Don't look down on them.”

“Huh?”

“I'm telling you to just focus on the current situation.”

Then—

—boom!—

—a hammer suddenly swung and smashed into Melchizedek's head.

.....

—rumble!—

“Hah. Look at these imbeciles. They betray us after I buy them the time they needed?”

Kiriel looked behind her and mumbled.

The shockwave.

And the aura of a powerful being coming from inside.

—boooooom!—

An attack, a bit different from the photon strike, had exploded out from within.

An attack that the repulsion coating could not handle.

—szzzzzzsssztt!—

The countless robots had simply melted away under this strike.

And after dodging away from its trajectory, Kiriel looked into the hole.

At a soldier who was wearing some strange armor.

Although some sort of visor covered his face, she knew.

That he was smiling.

Because standing right behind him, N-Maria was also smiling.

Kiriel's smiling expression stiffened and began to stretch into a horrifying smile.

‘Hansoo told me about this.’

<Once the lock is disabled... we don't need anybody there. Deal with them accordingly.> ‘Deal with them accordingly... Good.’

Then—

—kachak!—

A strange red armor started to surround Kiriel's body.

And soon it covered her terrifyingly cold smile.

Chapter 352 : A legacy from the depths(1)

—whooosh!—

Hansoo's sneak attack had been quite effective, actually.

He'd successfully struck the enemy before the strange being next to Melchizedek could react.

Of course, this didn't mean the attack had hit the head exactly.

—boom!—

Hansoo's hammer flew through Melchizedek's head and smashed into the wall behind him.

'Tsk. Hologram.'

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders.

Its aura had felt so real that he'd tried to attack, but it was a fake.

Countless nanoparticles were recreating the image where the hammer had gone through.

—sssss—

The nanoparticles gathered together to quickly recreate the image of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek smiled.

"Hahaha! You think I'm a retard? Why would I come here with my actua—"

"Shut up."

—paaazzzztt!—

Lightning crashed onto the spot where Melchizedek had stood on.

The countless nanoparticles burned up since the hologram couldn't maintain the image anymore, disappearing along with Melchizedek's annoying voice.

‘Too bad.’

There was a chance that it was the real thing since Melchizedek was quite a curious being, but it seemed to be quite cautious in its movements.

And at that moment—

<Tsk, how ruthless. I just wanted to chat.>’

—the figure clad in the strange mechanical armor began to speak.

Hansoo chuckled.

“I see you don’t know much about manners. You’re supposed to meet face-to-face if you want to chat.’

<Please understand, I’ve received quite a blow from your kind, you see.> ‘Your kind, huh?’

Hansoo then realized why Melchizedek was being so cautious.

‘Looks like it wasn’t an easy victory.’

Although he’d known that the Nelkipa was under Melchizedek’s control since it was moving towards Ankara, it seemed that the process hadn’t been a painless one.

Then—

—boom!—

He heard the sound of a large collision in the distance.

Followed by a shockwave from two high-energy attacks smashing against each other.

One side seemed familiar; the other was not.

Only one thing was clear—their strength levels were similar.

—boom!—

—boom!—

Various small and large collisions continued as the whole train shook.

There were no artificial transcendents that could fight on Kiriel's level.

Which meant only one thing.

‘The Dragon God forces are here.’

He wondered where they connected the Quantum Transmission, but they seemed to have connected directly with the fleet.

—rumble—

Hansoo decided to hurry as he felt the trembling grow increasingly stronger.

The opponent would be attacking at full force, and he didn't know what would happen to Kiriel.

‘I'm... going to smash them apart.’

Then—

— he heard a voice from the being's visor.

<I'll give you one last chance. Give up and back off. I don't like unnecessary fights, and I have enough things stressing me out.> He could even sense a slight aura of annoyance from Melchizedek's voice.

Melchizedek did not like variables.

Immensely so.

It didn't have any methods to deal with people from climbing up from below since a higher being usually handled that.

And the situations on the higher floors also made it difficult to manage the lower ones.

In the midst of this chaos, it had lost its control over the lower floors.

There had never been a case like this in the past.

This armed being had also been raised to fight the two things on

the upper floors, not this kid.

It had barely been able to pull enough precious materials together to make this armor. Meanwhile, some crazy bastard had climbed up from below and started to take over the research center.

How could he not be annoyed?

Hansoo shrugged.

“It’s possible.”

<Yeah?>

Melchizedek's voice brightened at this.

If this mechanical armor was damaged, it would make his current situation even worse.

It was best to avoid a fight.

But Hansoo continued to speak.

“Yeah, if you change the trajectory of Nelkipa to any direction other than Ankara. If you do that, then I’d gladly help you smash apart Clementine’s forces.”

—kiiiiing—

The armed being started to activate as soon as Hansoo finished his words.

And a hateful voice came out from the visor.

If it had an actual face, Hansoo would be able to see its enraged expression.

<Give up my goals, huh?... I believe you guys use the phrase ‘you f***ing bastard’ in situations like this, right?> Then— —boooooom!
—

—a giant shockwave of energy resonated out from the barrel behind the mechanical armor.

.....

—boooom!—

‘Ugh. I guess they’re fighting, too.’

There seemed to have been a collision on the other side as well.

She inferred this from the giant shockwave that rose into the sky in the distance.

‘Yeah... something like that wouldn’t just let him leave in peace.’

Kiriel thought of the horrifying aura she’d felt before as she looked at her own opponent.

‘Annoying.’

—tonk—

Kiriel stared at her opponent with annoyance—they had created a hexagonal shield to block the fang in her hand—and she continued to charge at it.

—boom!—

—boooom!—

She and the armored Dragon God Soldier dodged, deflected, and re-directed each other’s attacks, with the energy from each encounter causing countless explosions to occur around them.

N-Maria sighed as she looked at the soldier slowly push Kiriel away from her.

‘Good. Good. I didn’t expect the Dragon God force would actually come...’

She was skeptical throughout the entire process of calling for help.

Aside from their job of guarding the three royal families, they only implemented the Dragon God forces for the most important missions.

She, a Technocrat, had no authority whatsoever in even minutely requesting a Dragon God Soldier who wielded the secret weapon, the Dragon God armor.

But she had asked anyway, because she needed something at this level to go up against that monstrous female, Kiriel.

She realized that her choice was not a mistake.

That power.

Enough power to push Kiriel back.

“Uhhh, Maria? Weren’t we in an alliance?”

“Oh god... it’s a Dragon God Soldier.”

The countless B and A-levels were at a loss.

They had never expected to see such a scene in their entire lives.

N-Maria refocused and said:

“We’ll now focus on controlling the other robots. The Dragon God Soldier will deal with the alien.”

Her underlings were still confused at the current situation, but they nodded.

They realized that this was the only thing they could do.

But at that moment—

<You dumb b****! What are you doing!? Hurry and restart the Quantum Transmission! The cooldown ends soon!> “...Huh?”

While N-Maria was at a loss from the orders that came from the Dragon God Soldier in the distance— ‘This dumb b****!’

The Dragon God Soldier of Kalkiroun, <R-Korun Nell>, shouted with rage.

<Hurry and reactive the Quantum Transmission! This... I’m being pushed back right now!> Then— —boooooom!—

—the Dragon God Soldier was smashed through the walls of the

train as he landed on a building in the distance.

<Dammit! What is this monster!?!>

R-Korun Nell charged back towards Kiriel as he cursed out loud and shouted at N-Maria.

<You dumbass! Hurry and reactivate it while I block her! Other Dragon God Soldiers are waiting for the transfer!> “Ah! Yes! Everyone, please! Help!”

N-Maria hurriedly started preparing to reactivate the Quantum Transmission again.

With a question on her mind.

‘...There’s more than one Dragon God Soldier?’

The Dragon God Soldier was not someone so easily deployed.

They were designated in crucial parts of Angkara, constantly prepared for situations that desperately needed their services.

Even if the sons and daughters of royal families were in danger, having more than one Dragon God Soldier at the scene was too much.

It made no sense.

R-Korun saw N-Maria stumbling and seemed to have realized her confusion as he answered: <Do you really think we’ve come to save a few low-ranked members of royalty?> “...Is there something going on in Nelkipa that I don’t know about?”

As N-Maria’s expression changed—

—R-Korun shouted:

<Yes! Yes! So hurry! Hurry and reactivate that thing, you b****!>
—swoosh—

<Ahhh!>

R-Korun Nell roared as he saw the alien charging towards him, a pair of terrifying eyes locking into his own.

.....

—boooooom!—

Hansoo realized that the strikes had weakened to the point where he could ignore them as he smashed the artificial being with his hammer.

—crunch!—

Mjolnir smashed away the outer circuits, causing sparks to fly everywhere.

But then—

—grab—

The being released clouds of white steam as it grabbed onto Hansoo's arm and started to squeeze.

—crack!—

‘Tsk.’

—tonk!—

Hansoo felt the bones in his left arm cracking as he kicked away the being and then smashed it with his hammer again.

—boom!—

With a much more powerful attack than before.

The Mjolnir, surrounded by three dragons, smashed apart the being's core energy system responsible for powering up its energy strikes.

—crunch!—

<Hahaha! Not bad!>

Despite its broken core, Melchizedek's voice continued speaking through the visor on the being's head.

At this moment, Hansoo spoke out.

“This isn't something you can make on your own. What have you

done?”

The armor was just a shell.

It was much inferior in quality in comparison to the Dragon God armor.

The secret behind it was not the shell, but the thing inside it.

Something that made it different from the other artificial transcedents.

Even Melchizedek couldn't make this.

<...>

The laughter from the visor stopped.

<You know too much. What are you?>

An uncomfortable voice rang out from the visor.

And through the broken armor—

—Hansoo saw a bright lifeform, one that did not fit the machines surrounding it.

Then...

The Ark-Roa's crystal, which he had gained from the floor below, began to vibrate.

Chapter 353: A legacy from the depths (2)

<I was going to keep this as a secret weapon, but... I guess I don't need to hide it anymore.> As these words came out from the visor.

—crunch—

—crackle—

The machine parts surrounding the lifeform broke away.

Everything from the core and the armor fragments.

They weren't needed anyway.

All these machine parts that transcended past the limits of a normal human were nothing against the likes of Hansoo and the other Transcendents.

But if it were something created from a 2-Star Transcendent, then that was a different story.

'Is it finally going to show itself?'

But something else outside of his expectations then occurred.

—chiiiiik—

The thing that appeared through the white steam was not a humanoid form.

A smooth and shiny set of armor, like that of an insect.

And the bright blue organs and muscles visible between them.

Living armor.

Connected via various tentacles and spines, the living armor perfectly covered its body even after shedding away the machine armor.

'So that's the thing that deflected my Nine Dragons Strike.'

A strange liquid seeped out from inside, quickly fixing and mending the cracked part of the armor, caused by his previous

strike.

A powerful-looking armor that was comparable to his hammer, Mjolnir.

But the armor seemed indifferent towards its owner—it continuously sucked something away from the user through the spines and tentacles.

“Aren’t you being too shy? To be clad in such armor.”

—chiizzzzzzk—

He heard Melchizedek’s voice coming from the being’s head.

<Well, if you wish to see the face of a lady, the knight’s efforts are needed, right?> ‘This is a female?’

Well, it was easy to misunderstand it as a male because of its size—it was wearing two layers of armor.

Of course, it was only this big because it had two sets of armor... The being inside was definitely a female.

<Let’s see... if you even have the right to stand up to this lady.> Then— —whooosh!—

Tremendous amounts of energy started radiating out of the bright blue armor.

.....

—boooooom!—

Kiriel struck the Dragon God Soldier with the fang in her hand.

—crunch!—

“Haaa!”

R-Korun Nell, the Dragon God Soldier, shouted as he resisted the force threatening to destroy both his arm and the shield protecting it.

‘What...a...freak...’

“Ahhh!”

R-Korun Nell restructured his body parts and then looked at the small female pushing him back.

Her arm was so thin, like a child's.

And that tiny bone dagger in her small and white, delicate hands.

That dagger should be something that decorated a house of royalty, and not something to be used in a fight.

But the reality was harsh.

The thin and feeble-looking arm of this female had enough strength to crush him and take his life the second he let his guard down.

‘What... in the world?!’

R-Korun Nell continued to scream in his mind.

Every part of the Dragon God Armor, the ultimate agglomeration of his planet's technology, trembled as if about to break apart at any moment.

R-Korun Nell screamed again as he squeezed out the energy of his two main cores and eighteen sub-cores to their maximum limits.

<Hurry up! Hurry the hell up!>

<Yes! Yes, I'm trying!>

‘Damn... I hope she doesn't realize.’

He was sending the messages through brain waves, so this monster of a girl shouldn't be able to hear him.

—crunch!—

“Haaaaa!”

But sadly for R-Korun Nell, Kiriel's trait had long been activated and currently in use.

<Hurry... Transmis....I will...>

‘Hmm? Did he say she needed to restart the Quantum Transmission?’

Kiriell, within that small moment of contact, had read the memory within the visor.

They shouldn’t be trying to reactivate that thing this desperately just to send some random presents or snacks.

Which meant that they were trying to call something that could turn their current situation.

Kiriell thought to herself:

‘There’s more coming?’

If that happened then things would get much more annoying.

Although she was pushing him back, he was still extremely annoying.

—boooom!—

“Ahhhh!”

Kiriell frowned as the Dragon God Soldier pushed her back with his shield and backed off.

Her forte didn’t lie in prolonged battles anyway.

—whooosh—

And as she backed off, two beams exploded out from the barrels on his back.

‘Ugh, why is a personal armament so strong?’

That armor was not a simple one.

Kiriell stared at the armor that allowed one to fight on the same level as a Transcendent and then she changed her priority.

‘First... I need to stop them from gaining reinforcements.’

And that looked easier anyway.

—clang!—

As she drew a line with her fang, a bright line appeared in the air and shot towards the researchers.

She'd left them alone because they hadn't done anything worth killing them for, but if they were preparing such a thing behind her back, that was a different matter.

—kiiiing!—

As her attack closed in on them, something rose up from the ground and created a translucent barrier.

—tonk!—

Kiriél sighed as she looked at the strange mechanisms the Dragon God Soldier had thrown the moment he arrived.

It looks like he'd prepared meticulously for this possibility.

The barrier didn't look simple either.

At this rate, her long-range attacks wouldn't be enough to destroy it.

—boom!—

Kiriél dodged the attack from the Dragon God Soldier, spun around and smashed down onto the translucent barrier.

—crackle!—

“Ahhhh!”

—ooooong—

As N-Maria screamed fearfully, the machine responsible for the Quantum Transmission started to light up behind the researchers.

‘...Damn.’

As Kiriél was about to swing her dagger again at the machine—
“No!”

—boom!—

R-Korun Nell desperately charged forward and slammed onto

Kiriel.

“Ugh...”

—boom!—

As Kiriel, whose focus had not been on the Dragon God Soldier, flung forward onto the ground.

R-Korun Nell gasped for breath but soon started to laugh.

“Haa...Haaa..Haahaha....UHAHAHAHA!”

‘We won!’

Although the armor now only worked at 60% capacity since he’d constantly overloaded it during the fight, it didn’t matter.

The Quantum Transmission had already started.

The Fusion Reactor pumped in energy into the machine, enough to power three cities.

The Quantum Transmission’s cooldown had ended.

And R-Korun Nell stood up, looked at the bright light that signaled the start of the transmission and cursed at Kiriel.

“You damned b****! It’s all over now! Hahahaha!”

‘You won’t die peacefully.’

She could wield such strength with just her body.

She would be a good research sample.

She would be dissected over and over again until they unraveled all her secrets.

He and the Neropa Union.

He and the Nell family, the controllers of the fleet of flames, would become much more powerful.

As he thought about combining that strength with the Dragon God armor, his heart pounded.

And not only that.

He would receive a tremendous reward for achieving this battle merit and take a giant leap upwards in his family's hierarchy.

‘Before that... I’ll play around with you for a bit. Damn b****.’

He’d felt pain until now, but wasn’t it a royal’s job to give joy to the people as well?

Although he would have to share that joy with the one arriving soon, that was fine.

Since comrades should share the acquired loot anyway.

Kiriel sighed as she looked at the man staring at her with a perverted gaze while licking his lips.

‘I wish a prince would just pop out of thin air to save me.’

The situation was not good.

Although she was stronger than him, he wasn’t some scarecrow.

And it was impossible to stop the transmission at this point.

Looking at his confident expression, it looked like another Dragon God Soldier was coming.

Kiriel held tightly onto her knife and thought: ‘It was just getting fun, too...’

Up until now, her life had been very boring.

Training and becoming stronger, that was it.

There was nothing that made her feel joy except when she followed Hansoo’s tracks.

She had finally found the owner of those tracks and things were just getting exciting, but...

‘No... I must stop this.’

If she backed off here, then these things would continue to crawl out.

She had to stop them here.

If not, then Hansoo would really be in danger.

“Hahahaha! Why? Aren’t you going to keep fighting?”

‘I will. Calm down, you damn bastard.’

...SSSS...

As Kiriel prepared to charge at him again—

—kiiiiiiing!—

—a tremendous shockwave rang out from a distance.

Energy so powerful it shocked both R-Korun Nell and Kiriel.

“...Huh?”

“What?”

The moment both of them exclaimed out loud—

—boooooom!—

—the sound of a loud explosion occurred, followed by a blinding light, as a third of the train turned into nothing behind them.

Including the Fusion Reactor.

Then—

“No... No!! NOOOO!”

‘The Quantum Transmission!’

...kiiiiiiing...

N-Maria started freaking out as the bright light began to dim.

.....

“...Not bad.”

—tatatak—

Hansoo, who had dodged the bright light that had blown away a third of the train, looked at his own burned skin and muttered to

himself.

What power.

He'd blocked it with the Mjolnir and even dodged to the outermost areas, but it still managed to damage him this badly.

—ooooong!—

Hansoo looked at the trembling Mjolnir that seemed to be in pain and stared at the one who'd caused all this.

‘No, using something like this isn’t free.’

And as he expected—

—crackle—

<What the... Why isn't this listening?!>

—the bright armor crazily sucked out more energy through its spines and tentacles.

Hansoo stared at Melchizedek freaking out and thought to himself.

Chapter 354: A legacy from the depths (3)

“Ah... Ahhh!”

—chiiiiiiing—

N-Maria freaked out as she looked at the dying light.

‘No! How is this real?! What is this?!’

The size of a city.

The research center’s train wagons were huge—just one wagon was the size of a larger city.

And the Fusion Reactor was divided into different sectors so even if one part was damaged it would still work.

Theoretically, even if 60% of the Reactor were damaged the Quantum Transmission would still work.

But she had never expected an entire wagon, the size of an entire city, to disappear in just an instant.

Of course.

How could the battles of these ‘human’-sized people be on such a large scale?

But this was the reality.

...tata...tatata...

As N-Maria looked at the stark spot where the giant wagon had been— “Oh. It doesn’t look like it’ll activate for quite a while?”

“...”

“So, what were you saying to me before? Huh?”

—a cold voice rang out throughout the area.

Then—

—boooom!—

“Argh!”

—R-Korun Nell screamed alongside the sound of a huge collision.

‘Damn!’

Both sounds woke up N-Maria from her daze.

‘Noo... No!’

At this rate, everyone would die.

Before, there was more than enough time to summon one more Dragon God Soldier.

But not anymore.

Now, Kiriel had more than enough time to kill them off before they could summon another Dragon God Soldier.

N-Maria clenched her teeth and stared solemnly at R-Korun Nell, who was desperately trying to resist.

‘Think. Think. THINK!’

—clack—clack—clack—clack—

N-Maria’s teeth trembled.

She had to think of something.

Something to solve this situation.

If not, she would really end up dying.

If she failed here, then her chances of survival would be close to zero.

‘...The robots? Should I control them?’

—boom!—

But N-Maria shook off this thought as she heard more loud sounds of impact.

No way.

She’d just melt them away before they could touch even a single

strand of her hair.

‘Threaten? That I wouldn’t cooperate?’

She shook that thought off as well.

She didn’t know if she was needed anymore, and she wasn’t confident either.

She wasn’t confident that she could withstand the possible torture that person would put her through.

‘I... I have to reverse the situation!’

Whether it was helping the Dragon God Soldier or ending this fight.

She had to stop it.

And as N-Maria racked her brains.

“Ahhhh! You b****!”

R-Korun Nell extended his arm towards N-Maria.

Then—

—chrrkrkrk!—

The Barrier Reactor on the ground flew towards R-Korun Nell.

R-Korun Nell had concluded that there was no more hope for the Quantum Transmission and took back the Barrier Reactor, hoping to run away.

R-Korun Nell had given up on the researchers who had no more value.

N-Maria and the other researchers screamed at this scene.

“Ahhhh!”

“No! If you take that...!”

N-Maria screamed.

She would be exposed to her attacks now.

Even if their bodies were enhanced, even a tiny fragment of energy from that battle could kill them.

‘Damn! And here I was trying to turn the situation...!’

As N-Maria looked at R-Korun Nell with hateful eyes— —her gaze met R-Korun Nell’s.

And then realized.

That she’d deluded herself.

‘...What have I done?’

Despite being pushed back, he was looking at her with worry.

But there was no warmth behind those eyes.

They were cold.

Cold eyes that were worried that she would actually survive and not get killed.

And after seeing those very eyes, N-Maria came to a realization.

That her death was already determined.

The one that really wanted her dead was not that monster of a woman in the distance.

Even if that woman didn’t kill her.

Even if R-Korun Nell won.

They would die anyway.

This place had a secret so important that the Nell family had even sent a Dragon God Soldier to hide it.

How could they survive, even if they were only slightly related to the whole thing?

Especially her, who had even illegally borrowed the Nell family member’s emergency code to contact them.

N-Martin’s face flashed past her eyes.

The man who believed that he had sacrificed himself for everyone.

But she now had a revelation.

‘...Bastard. He knew all along. That this would happen.’

And the moment she realized that she'd set her destiny in stone—
“Hahaha... Ahahahahaha!”

—N-Maria started to laugh maniacally.

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

“Ahhhhh!”

“Nooo!”

N-Maria watched in despair as random fragments from the battle flew towards them, killing the researchers around her.

For what had they struggled?

‘And... he’s the one killing us.’

Ironically, the one killing them wasn’t Kiriel.

R-Korun Nell, even as he ran away, was sending attacks towards her and the researchers.

N-Maria’s expression hardened.

‘Yeah...this is my final gift to you...you....You damned Nell family.’

—tatatatata!—

N-Maria’s fingers started to move quickly amidst the explosions around her.

—kiiiiing!—

The research center started to whirl as N-Maria inputted her final commands.

‘It’s...done.’

N-Maria dropped her hands with a satisfied expression.

At least she’d accomplished one of her goals before she died.

‘Let’s see...’

As N-Maria scratched something on the ground and looked around the research center with a relieved expression— —she heard a brainwave transmission in her head.

<You piece of scum. You couldn’t even accomplish what I asked, so this is a suitable death for you. What’s the point of living? Be grateful that you’ll die under the hands of the Nell family.> As R-Korun Nell’s message ended—

—whooosh!—

—a tremendous piece of structure flew towards them.

R-Korun Nell had thrown it amidst his struggle to escape.

‘Hah... I can read him like a book.’

N-Maria chuckled at this entirely expected situation.

‘Whatever, struggle a bit longer if you wish. I’m going to rest now.’

—whooosh!—

N-Maria closed her eyes as the house-sized piece of metal flew towards her.

.....

—boooom!—

<Phew... It’s finally listening. Sorry about that.> —crunch!—

Hansoo felt disappointed as he looked at the armored being that was charging towards him again.

‘Too bad. Could’ve been an easy way out.’

It was an attack on the same level as one that used all nine of his

dragons.

Of course, an attack of that level had a price to pay.

An attack that squeezed out every drop of mana in one's body to use.

If he had dodged the attack a few more times, then it would've run out of energy.

But as Melchizedek started to control it, instead of firing out more of those strikes it instead contained the energy within its armor and charged towards him.

—boom!—

His Thousand Soldiers Armor broke apart a little more every time it hit him.

—boom!—

Hansoo smashed her away with the Mjolnir and then checked his armor.

‘I guess it lasted quite a while.’

The Thousand Soldiers Armor was an artifact that had existed during a time when the Abyss had still been closed.

And it was soon time to replace it.

‘Even if it's not an abyssal monster... I just need to defeat something strong, right?’

The Ark-Roa's core resonated with the blue armor in front of him.

Which meant that they attracted each other.

Which meant that he could combine them into one and receive a greater reward.

‘Seriously, that fairy is the only one that takes care of me it seems.’

As Hansoo chuckled and grasped tightly onto Mjolnir—
—kiiing!—

—a strange wave of energy pulsed from the wagon.

And as he sensed this—

—hooongg!—

—Hansoo frowned.

He'd felt this before.

‘The Quantum Transmission has activated? Kiriel left that alone?’

According to what he knew, Kiriel shouldn't have lost in that situation.

And as Hansoo was engrossed in his confusion— —boom!—

—a mocking laugh came out from the blue-armored figure.

<You have time to look away, huh?>

And Hansoo replied simply:

“I need to be careful when I break you since I'll be using it next.”

<You damned bastard!>

As Melchizedek felt enraged at Hansoo, who seemed to look down on his invention—

—zooooom!—

—the Quantum Transmission activated in the distance.

.....

“Quantum Transmission. Activated!”

R-Koronaita Nell, the captain of the Kalkuroun fleet, started laughing gleefully.

“Hahaha! Good! Send them in!”

<R-Marokanon Nell. Ready for deployment.> <R-Ouran Nell.

Ready for deployment.> <R-Atanon...>

Since they'd been ready for quite a while, multiple Dragon God Soldiers quickly reported their statuses.

‘Good, time for us to handle this now.’

For such scum to give them such an opportunity.

R-Koronaita Nell decided to erase all those annoying alien members as he spoke to the leader of the fleet's Technorat team.

“Prepare and contact R-Korun Nell.”

‘Tsk. If the communications aren't working properly, then you should be making it work.’

R-Koronaita Nell's good mood had been disturbed, and he was about to squeeze the technicians below, but then— N-Akuon, one of the Technorats in the cockpit, spoke out.

“It won't work!”

“What? The communications?”

N-Akuon shook his head.

“No... The transmission won't work!”

“What do you mean! You said it was activated, right? You useless...”

N-Akuon made a wronged expression as he shouted: “No, it's not a request for transmission, but the opposite!... It's transmitting something else over here!”

“...?”

‘Huh? What?’

R-Koronaita Nell frowned at N-Akuon's words.

Chapter 355 : A legacy from the depths (4)

—rumble—

“Ugh”

—chiiijijiiik—

R-Korun Nell, covered in his broken-down armor that was letting out sparks, sat on the ground and looked despairingly at the woman in front of him.

It wasn't just that he'd overloaded his armor, he felt like he was tied down with invisible chains.

He was trapped.

‘Damn... I can't even run anymore. This monster...’

He had tried so hard to run away, but it was all futile now.

R-Korun Nell grit his teeth as he looked at the woman slowly approaching him.

He couldn't die here.

Born of the Nell family, his abilities were recognized, and he had lived in luxury after rising to the R Level.

The Dragon God Armor had acknowledged him, so even the upper ranks of the clan couldn't mistreat him.

With this basis, he had massacred his way up to this point.

He had too much to lose—he couldn't die here.

R-Korun Nell breathed in and out and spoke to the woman.

“Let's make a deal.”

“Hmm?”

R-Korun Nell stared at Kiriel, who raised her dagger with an annoyed expression and continued to speak.

“I said... let's make a deal.”

“Didn’t you just say this was the end for me or something?”

R-Korun Nell’s insides burned with the flames of rage as Kiriel continued to mock him.

‘You b****. You’re really acting wild just because the situation has turned, huh?’

R-Korun Nell almost blurted angrily for her to kill him, but then stopped, managing to calm himself down.

Surviving was the most important thing.

“Just listen up. I’m more useful than you think. Let’s say you kill me. What then? It seems there's only you and that man in the distance... Are you going to go against the entire fleet with just you two? There are at least a few dozen Dragon God soldiers like me on that ship.”

Kiriel flinched at R-Korun Nell’s words.

‘There’s more than I expected. There’s really that many?’

That armor’s power really went beyond her expectations.

One or two might be okay, but if there were dozens of them, things would get very annoying.

‘You’d feel intimidated.’

He had succeeded in threatening her.

R-Korun Nell continued to speak as he looked at Kiriel currently lost in thought.

“So instead of killing me, take me hostage. Our planet is currently at War, so people of your level would gladly be taken in as guests. I don’t know what your goals are, but I can be the bridge between you and my people!”

R-Korun Nell continued to speak confidently.

‘Yeah. It has come to this already.’

He’d blurted out the random suggestion because he wanted to

secure his survival but after saying it, the idea didn't sound half bad.

And it wasn't that bad for him as well.

If he could persuade these barbarians to join his side, it would be beneficial for his own strength as well.

Would these barbarians, who'd fought all their lives, have ever experienced the luxury served in Angkara?

Even his kind, the Dragon God Soldiers, melted from such pleasure.

How could these barbarians not?

R-Korun Nell continued to feel more and more confident.

"Don't do anything you might regret and release me. I'll put in a good word for you! Our fleet will arrive soon!"

'...Look at this kid.'

As Kiriell looked at R-Korun Nell, who stared back at her with confidence—

—ooooooooong!—

—she heard the strange sound of a machine activating from a distance.

'...It's still activating. Wasn't it supposed to stop once she's dead?'

Kiriell left R-Korun Nell behind and ran to where the sound was coming from.

R-Korun Nell looked at this scene but didn't hold much hope.

'Dumb b****. What's the point of activating it after everything ends?'

Kiriell could just break the machine outright, and even if they did come over, she could easily ambush them.

It would only mean something if he still had any ground to hold.

As R-Korun Nell looked hatefully at the place where N-Maria had been—

—Kiriell quickly arrived before the machine and examined it.

If it were transferring something, she'd break it, but the situation felt a bit different.

‘Something is different.’

Then—

She saw the words written by her feet.

‘Hmm? What's this?’

<Don't stop it. This is something I'm sending.> Short, but to the point.

Kiriell started to use her Psychometry and began to read the memories within the message.

...chiiiizz...

And soon she saw N-Maria's expression and actions as she wrote the message.

The hand that scratched at Nelkipa's skin.

Carefree eyes that held a tinge of sadness.

And as Kiriell stopped at the scene of when she'd given up on everything—

—boom!—

—the Quantum Transmission started to activate.

—clank!—

The train, which had maintained its speed despite having its last wagon blown away, started to slow down.

As if its engine had turned off.

‘Wait. Engine...?’

As Kiriell looked at the sky.

Towards the distance.

A small light shone in the distance.

It was like the birth of a new star.

It was extremely small compared to the vast universe, but...

‘...That should be huge.’

Chills ran down Kiriell’s body.

If it could be seen from this far, she couldn’t imagine how large the explosion really was.

Then—

“AHH...AHHHH! YOU CRAZY B****! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH THE FUSION REACTOR! AHHH!”

R-Korun Nell started screaming in despair.

And Kiriell chuckled as she stared at R-Korun Nell.

“It seems there’s nothing to bridge to anymore, what to do?”

Although it was nice to see him beaten down another notch, she soon coldly calculated the situation.

Although it felt nice now, it didn’t seem like everything would be solved with just this.

‘Let’s see... I really need to stop wasting my time.’

Killing him was a waste too.

But if she gave him an inch, he might ask for a foot.

‘I’ll just knock him out and take him.’

She wasn’t the leader anyway.

Hansoo was the one that decided things anyway.

Kiriell made up her mind as she spoke coldly.

“Take a nap for a while.”

“What are you ta—kuhuk!”

—paak!—

Kiriél punched R-Korun Nell’s stomach through the broken part of the armor and knocked him out. She gazed into the distance.

‘I should go help now.’

—boom!—

—boom!—

The shockwaves from the collision transferred all the way to her location despite the flaming pillars continuously raining down from the sky, the impact shaking the entire Nelkipa.

‘...It’s going to be hard. Would I even be able to help? Hmm.’

Kiriél looked at her battle-scarred body and frowned.

Although she’d won, it wasn’t without a price.

That armor was indeed strong.

‘Stupid armor...’

Kiriél felt various parts of her body throbbing from pain and looked at the armor.

But then—

A line of thought appeared in her mind.

‘Can’t... can’t I wear that, too?’

Kiriél looked at the broken-down, but still usable-looking, Dragon God Armor.

.....

—kuuududuk!—

Hansoo smashed his opponent down onto the ground.

—boom!—

The impact created a loud sound as various cracks appeared on the Nelkipa's bright skin.

As well as on the blue armor.

But the blue-armored figure quickly swung her fist and attacked Hansoo's chest.

—boom!—

The attack pushed deeply in the area around Hansoo's chest.

Almost a fatal strike.

If she had pushed a bit further, she might have been able to smash apart his heart, but only a shocked voice came out from the visor.

<...You crazy bastard.>

—boooom!—

Hansoo didn't back off by even a single inch as he slammed the blue-armored figure deeper into the ground with the Mjolnir.

—crunch!—

Melchizedek, who had been watching the entire battle, shook his head as he looked at Hansoo's regenerating body.

'...It seems there are still a lot of things I don't know about. I didn't know such a dull creature existed.'

Having faith in its constantly regenerating body, it continued to fight over and over again.

With its bare body, it withstood attacks that would've killed a normal human being several times over, and then used that timing to retaliate with even stronger attacks.

Looking at it logically, there was no reason for his creation to lose in any aspect.

It was already strong, and Melchizedek had even modified it personally.

It even had a secret hidden inside, just in case.

If Melchizedek had sent his creation to the Nursery he'd prepared beforehand and fed it some crystals, it would've been an easy matter to take over the entire Nelkipa.

But sadly, it seemed impossible that his creation would win over the being in front of his eyes.

He had never thought that there'd be such an insane being that would bait its own heart in order to attack its opponent's head.

'...I guess there's nothing I can do.'

—boom!—

Melchizedek made a decision as he continued to look at Hansoo slamming his creation down onto the ground.

To release the limiter.

The limiter inside the heads of these things allowed him to control them, but the price for doing so was that they lost their most useful card.

<Trait.>

And this being that he'd modified had a trait that was amazingly suited for battle.

This was not the time to worry about controlling it.

At this rate, it would soon turn into minced meat between that hammer and Nelkipa's skin.

Melchizedek quickly spoke out through the visor after making his decision.

<This is the end of our conversation, it seems.> "...?"

Then—

—snap—

Melchizedek released the limiter, and his control over his

creation disappeared.

The voice from the visor stopped as the body shuddered.

But only for a moment.

—crunch!—

The blue-armored being raised her arm and grasped onto his Mjolnir.

‘...Her strength?’

Like magic, in just an instant the blue-armored woman’s strength had exploded past that of Hansoo’s and pushed the Mjolnir back.

And Hansoo saw familiar eyes through the helmet.

There was no sense of consciousness, only rage.

And he realized who it was.

‘Enbi...Arin.’

Orange Zone, the ruler of the Cross clan.

And his old comrade.

‘Who caught you and made you into this...?’

But before he could finish—

“Ahh... AHHHHH!”

—boom!—

—her Trait, <Tainted Emotions> had activated, exchanging her rage into strength as she started to attack Hansoo.

Chapter 356: A legacy from the depths (5)

She'd dreamed of this moment.
Of meeting him again and climbing up again.
But it didn't matter anymore.
After her capture, her body no longer followed her commands.
'It's too... tiring.'

Enbi Arin's conscious lay in a fetal position.
She could sense the ripples of battle outside the dark space where her consciousness was.
But she didn't want to care anymore.
There was nothing she could do anyway, and plus, she was really tired.
'Will you be able to kill me?'

Being modified inside the research lab, killing people outside all in the name of 'testing', and living as a scarecrow that followed orders.
As well as... living in this damned world.
She was tired of it all.
'I don't know who you are, but... I hope you succeed.'

.....

"Ahhhhhh!"
—booom!—

Hansoo shouted at Enbi Arin who was screaming in rage as she charged towards him.
"Come back now!"
—boom!—

Hansoo swung his Mjolnir and smashed it onto Enbi Arin's fist.

It created a tremendous shockwave between the hammer, which was larger than Enbi Arin's head, and her fist.

—crackakak!—

Hansoo grit his teeth as he looked at the fist and the blue armor surrounding it.

‘...It seems she's not thinking of waking up.’

As Melchizedek had left it, Enbi Arin's body was the same as a shell.

A shell without a control tower, just acting on impulse.

The issue was that this body was extremely enraged.

Rage was instinctive for survival.

Enbi Arin's body was currently burning up in rage and was struggling with all its strength to survive.

As if this was the only way to survive.

And as if the body was trying to prove this, the red aura surrounding Enbi Arin turned even more vibrant.

—boooooom!—

Enbi Arin leaped off the ground and charged towards Hansoo.

She'd simply stepped off the ground, but the entire floor shook as if there'd been an earthquake.

And Hansoo helplessly struck out with Mjolnir again as he watched this.

Since he couldn't just sit around and get hit.

—boom!—

The hammer and fist collided again as the resulting shockwave swept the surroundings again.

Hansoo looked sadly at Enbi Arin, who was becoming even

stronger and faster than before.

“Wake...UP!”

—boom!—

Finding a gap in her movements, Hansoo smacked face again and shouted.

At this rate, one of them would definitely die.

Tainted Emotions was the epitome of survival instincts.

It wasn't a skill without risk and gave her strength whenever she got angry.

<This... only you can know of this. This actually uses the hidden potential of my body.> Enbi Arin had told him this in the past.

The angrier she got, the more the current body used up its future body's potential to protect itself.

It was obvious, but... the longer she used it, the more it gnawed on her body.

‘And that body... ’

—squirm squirm—

Hansoo frowned at the armor connected to her body through various spikes and spines, squirming as if it were alive.

Armor that continuously sucked out the energy from one's body.

It looked extremely efficient, but of course, such efficiency wasn't free.

No.

The armor seemed to want the body to continue using its power—it was pushing Enbi Arin even more.

Making her continue to fight.

And Hansoo gritted his teeth at this.

He had seen a creature like this before.

Although it gave tremendous strength to its host, it gnawed on the life of its host and caused the host to go insane.

After Melchizedek's control tower had disappeared, Enbi Arin's body was now just filled with a crazed rage.

The only thing on its agenda was to beat its opponent.

"Ahhhh!"

Enbi Arin continued to scream and charged at him again.

—crunch!—

—crack!—

The ground fell apart with every step, shaking their surroundings.

—boooooom!—

Hansoo and Enbi Arin's bodies collided once again.

But it was a bit different this time around.

—crack!—

The surface of the blue armor seemed to swirl around strangely.

The liquid-like armor quickly made crackling noises as it turned crystalline.

—clang!—

Mjolnir, which could push back Enbi Arin before, simply bounced off the armor.

From the surface of the armor, which seemed to have evolved to counter Mjolnir.

—boooooom!—

Frowning, Hansoo activated his Demonic Dragon's Reinforcement to its limits in order to block Enbi Arin, who had begun to charge in during that small gap.

'...Nelkipa?'

Before he could finish this train of thought— —boom!—

—Enbi Arin charged in and smashed at his body.

Although Enbi Arin's Reinforcement was a level below his, the armor surrounding her body was more than enough.

“Kuhup!”

Hansoo dispersed the force as he flew back, groaning as he pondered.

‘...Should I retreat for a bit and come back?’

Enbi Arin's status was definitely not normal.

She was burning up her entire body's lifeforce to fight.

If that armor were a type of lifeform, it would care about its host.

If he disappeared, then it would return the host to its original status.

But then—

As if it liked Enbi Arin's current situation, it started to morph again.

—kuddduuduk!—

To an even stronger form.

“Ahhhh!”

Screams of pain mixed with rage came out from Enbi Arin's mouth.

And Hansoo frowned at this scene.

‘It was eviler than I thought, huh?’

Hansoo regretted comparing that armor to a parasite.

That armor was more evil than any abyssal creature in existence.

Since a parasite at least cared about the survival of the host.

But that blue armor was different.

It didn't care about the host's body at all.

It only cared about how it could suck even more energy out from the host's body.

There was nothing else he could do at this point.

He had to suppress Enbi Arin.

It wouldn't be easy, but he had to do it.

'Melchizedek... Where did he get such a thing?'

—boom! boom! boom! boom!—

As Hansoo grasped tightly onto the hammer, staring at Enbi Arin charging towards him again— —kiiiiing!—

—he felt a large amount of energy coming in from a distance.

Then—

—boooooom!—

—a beam appeared from a distance and slammed onto Enbi Arin who was charging towards him.

—boom!—

After the unexpected long-range attack flung Enbi Arin away— —something landed next to Hansoo.

And Hansoo chuckled after realizing who the person wearing the mechanical armor was.

Although they were in the middle of a battle, Kiriél's expression was indeed funny.

"It looks like it fits just fine, but what's with your expression?"

Kiriél looked with dissatisfaction at the armor covering her body and spoke out with a frown.

"Ugh... It feels really dirty! It sticks onto your body!"

Kiriél frowned as she saw the Dragon God Armor swirling around and latching onto her skin.

It didn't seem to have any loyalty towards its previous owner as it instantly fell apart and attached itself to her body the moment she touched it.

As if it yearned for an even stronger body.

She'd freaked out when she saw the living parts of the armor inside it.

'Is there nothing normal in this world? Machine or lifeform, choose between the two!'

Kiriell had worried about whether the armor, which had been worn by a man, would fit her but it had reconstructed itself perfectly around her.

She soon sighed and decided to focus on the battle.

—SSSS—

Enbi Arin stood up again.

And it didn't seem like the beam attack would work a second time.

—squirm—

The armor's surface was changing again.

'...That's a real monster there.'

Kiriell asked Hansoo:

"What should we do? Should we run?"

Looking at Enbi Arin's speed, it didn't seem like it would be easy to run away, but her aura was way too vicious to fight her currently.

Hansoo shook his head.

"No, I've figured it out thanks to you?"

"...?"

As Kiriell made a confused expression—

—boooooom!—

—Enbi Arin stomped down onto the ground and flew towards Hansoo.

At a tremendous speed.

—whooooosh!—

‘This...! Too fast!’

Looking at it from a distance and looking at it up close was extremely different.

“Dodge it!”

Kiriell prepared for impact as the now horrifying-looking armor closed in on them, but then a strange sound rang out next to her.

—tonk!—

‘...Huh?’

Kiriell freaked out after turning her head.

Hansoo had thrown away his hammer.

But even before Kiriell could think of the next step in his plan...

Enbi Arin had already jumped onto Hansoo.

And smashed Kiriell away as well.

—boom!—

“Huep!”

Kiriell quickly repositioned herself after the attack flung her away, only to be left speechless at the current scene before her eyes.

The scene of Hansoo and the monster-like armor grasping each other’s hands and having a power struggle.

—kuduk!—

—kududuk!—

It was so strong that Hansoo's arm was making strange noises as it trembled.

‘What...?’

As Kiriel was about to charge in and help— —Hansoo whispered something amidst the power struggle, his expression unreadable.

Something to his opponent in front of him.

“Come... to me. Isn't it time to switch owners?”

Words towards the armor and not Enbi Arin.

—squirm—

A part of the armor squirmed around as if it comprehended Hansoo's words.

—pushhook!—

—pushkshkshk!—

A few of the spines came out from Enbi Arin's body and pierced Hansoo, then started to suck Hansoo's energy out.

As if it were testing the waters.

And the moment Hansoo's energy flowed into the armor— —tremble—

—the entire set of armor started to shake.

A tremendous life force.

The extreme amount of potential hidden inside this body.

The blue armor realized instinctively as it tasted the tremendous amount of life force flowing into its body.

That this was the real deal.

The ‘transcendent being’ it had been attracted to was just an imitation of the real deal.

The original was always better than the fake and had more worth.

And soon, a change occurred.

—squirm—

The armor quickly changed its form after scanning Hansoo's body.

From hard armor to a liquid-like form.

And soon—

—ssssss—

—the blue liquid swirled around madly as it quickly covered Hansoo's body.

“Yes. Good boy.”

Hansoo chuckled coldly at the scene of the blue liquid instinctively moving onto a stronger host and was now covering his face.

He then looked worriedly over at Enbi Arin, whose face he could now see.

‘You can rest now. I’m sorry for being late.’

—kwaduk!—

The blue armor made a strange noise and started to condense onto Hansoo's body.

Chapter 357: A legacy from the depths (6)

—kwaddududuk!—

Hansoo frowned at the armor that kept constricting his body.
It wasn't simply squeezing his body.

—pushuk!—

He could clearly see it inserting its spines throughout his body.

Showing that it was going to have the upper hand in this relationship.

As Hansoo frowned at the sensation of the armor crazily sucking his energy out.

—ooooong!—

The Ark-Roa's crystal in his possession started to vibrate.

Then—

—shsst!—

The marble exploded as a black liquid shot out from inside it.
It was similar to when the Ark-Roa had been alive in the past.

“...They're both going crazy, huh?”

The armor which was trying to devour him from the outside— —
and the Ark-Roa's crystal which had exploded inside him to take over the armor.

Hansoo mumbled as he looked at this scene.

.....

—tata—

—tataatak—

“Ugh... Is this really fine?”

Kiriel mumbled quietly as she looked at Hansoo, who was

surrounded by a crystalline material.

It didn't seem like she could help and this made her even more worried.

And in her arms, an unconscious woman lay.

Of course, Kiriell knew this woman.

She was like a superstar in the lower zones 1, 2 and 3.

'Enbi Arin.'

The girl who ruled over the giant Cross clan in the old Orange Zone.

But currently, she was in a very pitiful state.

'...She'll die at this rate.'

Although she'd managed to escape from that evil armor, she had lost too much of her vital energy.

Well, if it was just that, then she might have been able to survive.

Since she was a transcendent after all.

The regenerative ability of a transcendent would heal the owner, even if the owner were on the brink of death.

The thing killing her wasn't her injuries, but rather herself.

Her Trait: <Tainted Emotion>.

She didn't know what had activated this trait, but one thing was clear to her: It gave the user strength in return for their life force.

And this woman was paying the price of using such strength with her entire body.

And her body had already been injured.

—chiiiik—

'She'll really die at this rate; the heals aren't working either.'

Kiriell bit her lower lip as she continued to use her healing skill.

It was like pouring water into a container with a hole at the bottom.

Enbi Arin was paying back her debt right now.

Of course, such a meager amount of heals wouldn't work.

The only thing keeping Enbi Arin alive right now was her original strength and Melchizedek's modified body.

'...Ugh, I should do this first.'

Kiriell clenched her teeth and used her Psychometry.

Soon—

—the memories hidden within Enbi Arin's body flew into Kiriell.

At that moment—

"Ahh..."

—Kiriell's gaze, which had already looked at Enbi Arin with pity, deepened.

Pain, pain, and more pain.

Ripped apart alive.

Disassembled alive.

Her body taken apart, and her insides forcibly turned into a machine.

As the Nanomachines seeped into her body, it forcibly modified her beautiful figure.

They had embedded thousands of chipsets into her head to control her actions, even controlling her emotions.

...SSS...

Kiriell couldn't bear it anymore, and she stopped her Psychometry.

It was painful to watch.

—pakakakang!—

Kiriél carefully used her skill to destroy the chipsets inside Enbi Arin’s head, and then looked at her with a sad expression.

Although she wouldn’t be controlled by Melchizedek anymore, those memories would remain.

‘...Maybe you might not even want to live anymore.’

Kiriél’s expression turned heavy as she stared at the dying Enbi Arin.

Kiriél realized that the reason why Enbi Arin wasn’t waking up was because she might not want to come out again.

Her healing skills weren’t working anyway.

‘I should bring him back.’

—whooosh!—

Kiriél remembered R-Korun Nell and flew towards the front of the research center.

.....

“...Huh?”

‘He got up already?’

Kiriél thought to herself as she brought back R-Korun Nell.

She had expected it to take a while, but it had already finished.

‘...Where did it all go?’

Kiriél was shocked.

The crystalline armor had disappeared.

‘That’s not an amount that could disappear in an instant.’

—thud!—

“Argh!”

Kiriél threw R-Korun Nell to the side and stared at him with eyes

filled with annoyance.

She then turned to talk to Hansoo but then stopped.

‘...’

Hansoo stared at Enbi Arin laid out on the ground with a heavy expression and then turned to Kiriel.

“Thank you. You’ve done well while I was gone.”

“It’s nothing. I did what I had to.”

These were her honest thoughts.

Thinking of what Enbi Arin had done, it was thanks to her that they’d had such an easy time going through the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Zones.

Hansoo glanced at Enbi Arin again and said:

“I will save this girl.”

“...How?”

Kiriel’s eyes widened.

Of course, saving her was the right thing to do.

But there weren’t any methods she could think of, and there wasn’t enough time left.

‘One week.’

Kiriel thought to herself.

She had meticulously checked Enbi Arin’s body.

At most, she had one week to live.

And this was only because of her transcendent vitality.

If any outside forces disturbed her, that might even shorten her time.

Hansoo said:

“We just need to turn her to into a 3-Star. That will heal most of

her injuries.”

“Ah.”

Kiriel realized.

He was right.

If Enbi Arin rose up a rank, everything would be solved.

But Kiriel soon shook her head.

“No, we’ll need a titanic amount of crystals.”

1-Star transcendents were common, but the amount of crystals one needed to make a 3-Star transcendent was on a different league of its own.

Even if they could earn more and better crystals than the lower floors, acquiring that many crystals in that short of a time was impossible.

There wasn’t enough time.

‘And weirdly, there are no beings from the Abyssal race on this floor.’

Even the floor below hadn’t been this bare.

Hansoo shook his head.

“The Abyssal beings are attracted to where there are humans—there are almost no humans around, so they aren’t here.”

Predators would only gather around their prey.

It was common logic.

It wasn’t that Melchizedek had killed off every Abyssal being on the 1st floor.

They simply hadn’t come to a place without prey.

“...Meaning that the humans are all gathered somewhere else.”

Melchizedek said that he’d captured and taken away all the humans so she’d thought the humans would’ve been in the

research center, but she realized something while she fought.

That there weren't any humans here.

She knew that a few humans would be used to create artificial transcents, but they'd taken too many away for it to be merely for that purpose.

'Why?'

But Kiriel soon came to a realization.

"...These guys also have a Nursery."

Hansoo nodded.

If that weren't the case, how else could they explain the sheer number of transcents?

Feed the humans to the Abyssal beings to raise their numbers, turn them into crystals to create transcents and modify them to create artificial transcents.

"He's really efficient, isn't he..."

Kiriel mumbled, her expression cold.

Melchizedek was using the humans in a very clean and efficient manner.

"I'll try to find where it is. It should be easy to find using Psychometry."

It wouldn't separate such a large number of humans.

For it to be really efficient, it would have gathered them all into one place.

She just needed to find that place.

'It's probably on a different floor.'

Hansoo thought to himself as he looked at Kiriel running off.

'Melchizedek... How did you become like this?'

The Melchizedek he knew wasn't this evil.

Hansoo’s expression hardened.

‘Finish the preparations on the upper floors.’

He needed to become a 3-Star before he reached the top floor anyway.

If the Abyssal race had gathered in one place, he could resolve it all in one go.

‘It’s a bit dangerous, but I even acquired this... there are a lot of things different in this life.’

Legacy.

And while Hansoo focused—

—chrrrrrk!—

—something hidden beneath his skin quickly shot through to form a gauntlet around his hand, and then quickly disappeared.

‘...Damn. Every single member of this race is a monster. Seriously.’

R-Korun Nell stared at this scene in horror, but then thought of the Kalkuroun Fleet.

Although the Fusion Reactor’s explosion would’ve swept them away, it wouldn’t be enough to destroy the entire fleet.

Their strength wasn’t that low.

‘I wonder what happened... Damn. Well, I guess I’m not in a position to worry about that.’

R-Korun Nell looked at the sky and remembered his current situation.

.....

—rumble—

“Haa....Haaa.”

“ ... ”

The flagship of the Kalkuroun Fleet, <Koronaita>, was silent. Because of R-Koronaita Nell's anger.

“...How long until arrival?”

“We're almost there. But... there's something at the place where we're supposed to arrive.”

“Huh?”

N-Akuon flinched—he already knew R-Koronaita Nell was pissed—as he beamed an image in the air.

And through that screen, they could see the scene above Nelkipa.

“...the hell are those things?”

<Ahhhh!>

Hundreds of thousands of alien beings, trapped within a strange facility.

And the strange monsters that were devouring the aliens and raising their numbers.

‘...Melchizedek, you insane can. What the hell is going on in your head?’

R-Koronaita frowned as he looked at the grotesque scene before his eyes.

Chapter 358: Breeding City (1)

Giant metal walls surrounded the perimeter.

With hundreds of humans placed inside.

Of course, their situation wasn't quite the best.

“Ahh...”

—crunch!—

—kuduk!—

Ariel trembled in fear as she looked at the horrifying insectoid slowly crawling towards her.

No matter where she turned to, there was nowhere to run.

Although the area was large, there were simply too many of these monsters.

‘Daddy...’

Ariel felt like her soul had escaped her body as she stared at the countless human-sized insects crawling around.

<Go! Live on! Damn it!>

She'd barely been able to run to the 2nd floor thanks to her father's sacrifice.

But she didn't know then.

That the floors above were already a hell for them.

‘Ahh...’

Ariel fell into despair as she looked at the monster gradually approaching her.

Although she couldn't resist because of the chipset on her neck controlling her body, even without the chip there wasn't much she could have done.

Since they wouldn't have caught her if she'd had that kind of

strength in the first place.

Those two years painstakingly learning skills and gaining experience had all been useless.

Since no one on the lower floors had taught them about this current situation.

Those beings they called ‘transcendents’ attacked the humans, while robots patrolled the area to find them.

There was nowhere to run to, and nothing to hold onto anymore.

She’d frantically struggled and ran away to the third floor.

But she then realized—

—exactly where they’d sent all the captured women.

—pushuk!—

“Kuhuk!”

Ariel fell unconscious as she stared at the insectoid creature shoving its strange proboscis down her throat, inserting strange things inside.

.....

“So, there’s a Defense City on the third floor?”

R-Korun Nell nodded.

“...I don't know if it’s the third floor or whatnot, but Nelkipa’s Defense City is in that place you guys talked about.”

After taking over Nelkipa to use it in battle, the Neropa Union had sent over countless members, tools, and materials.

Including Melchizedek.

To the Defense City, Aokan.

A city where hundreds of thousands of researchers and soldiers had lived.

If Nelkipa was a country, this city was like its capital.

Although they had gained control over Nelkipa, they could have overtaken it with force.

And the empire that the Neropa Union was warring against, Pompeion, had the strength to do this.

Scumbags who would barge in the second the Neropa Union finished their research on Nelkipa, and steal everything.

And the city that they'd turned into the first line of defense against them was Aokan.

“And... our fleet is probably headed towards that location now.”

R-Korun Nell mumbled, staring at the diagonal elevator in the distance.

Although the Kalkuroun Fleet had experienced a huge loss, they wouldn't give up this location.

Even in a situation where the Empire somehow managed to push them back, they would not give up on this place.

Since they needed a weapon that could turn the situation around.

And this giant creature had the potential to do so.

Since the armor that guy was wearing seemed to be much more priceless than the Dragon God Armor.

—chrrrk—

R-Korun Nell was shocked at the strange blue armor that appeared and disappeared through the man's skin.

“The Nursery that you guys are looking for is likely located there. Since that's the only place that could manage so many people effectively.”

‘And Melchizedek would feel the safest there as well.’

R-Korun Nell thought to himself.

The first place Melchizedek had taken after its rebellion was the Defense City, Aokan.

The heavily-guarded giant city had many people, so it had been very reliant on the AI, Melchizedek.

And Melchizedek would've felt safer only after taking over Aokan as it was the most heavily-guarded city.

Because it was a city meant to be the first line of defense, the entire city was split into various sections by alloy walls.

Even if enemy forces breached the outer walls, they could divide the city up and buy more time until the enemies reached the central area.

Although the central area was a residential location, as a place for a Nursery, Aokan was one of the best places to set it up.

It would be hard for the people inside to run away, and it could divide them into groups of a few hundred or a few thousand.

An alloy similar to that of their starships had also been used to make the walls.

These walls could even withstand the Dragon God Soldiers to a certain degree.

‘Wait, these insane bastards want to go to such a place?’

R-Korun Nell was at a loss as he looked at the two beings who wanted to crawl into a place filled with monsters from the Abyss, as well as Melchizedek's soldiers.

It was one heck of a way to commit suicide.

Those weren't even all the forces within the city.

Apparently, it was now a place to create those transcendents.

There was definitely a large number of those artificial transcendents crawling around the area as well.

‘Please... please just let me go.’

If they let him go, then he just needed to use the armored vehicle in the distance and run away.

According to what he found out after connecting to the database, these aliens had to use the elevators to move between the areas, but he and the other natives didn't need to.

They could move about freely.

'I just need to meet up with the Kalkuroun Fleet after I run away.'

A happy ending.

As long as these guys let him go.

As R-Korun Nell prayed inside his mind.

Kiriel spoke to Hansoo.

"What shall we do? It doesn't sound easy."

It looked like the preparations above wouldn't be simple.

Melchizedek wasn't stupid either; it would be preparing even more.

Since it would expect its enemy to climb up from below.

'It might even have prepared something by the entrance.'

Hansoo then looked at R-Korun Nell.

"He's going to have to help us."

"...Please, no. You damned creatures! I don't even have the Dragon God Armor, what can I even do to help?!"

R-Korun Nell only had on a layer of clothing he found on the Melkasus, and had no weapons or armor of any sort.

Didn't they just say that it wouldn't be easy?

If monsters like them were going to have a hard time, what would he, who didn't even have the Dragon God Armor anymore, be able to do?

Although the Melkasus had basic weapons, those wouldn't be enough to take care of a few of Melchizedek's mass-produced

machines.

Hansoo chuckled.

“No, there’s something only you can do.”

He and the other humans couldn’t, but there was something that R-Korun could do as a native of this place.

Hansoo then gazed towards the skeletal Enbi Arin and thought to himself: ‘Just wait a bit longer.’

“Let’s prepare, since we have to go through the elevator.”

Hansoo looked towards the distance, at the Elevator heading towards the middle of Nelkipa.

.....

—rumble—

The giant city, Aokan.

The centermost area of Aokan, an area that maintained its stability with gravitational mechanisms and supporting structures.

Located at the top of the city’s central structure, <Mimir>, Melchizedek’s hologram frowned as it looked down at the city.

No, it looked towards a distant location beyond the city.

‘I wonder... did she win?’

It had lost control over the Main Research Center as well as the product he had so painstakingly created.

There were actually a few more 2-Star transcendents.

But she was the only one that had the willpower to withstand the <Legacy> it had dug up from deep within.

It didn’t know what had happened to its secret weapon.

Although it had sent something over to check, the train was already nowhere in sight.

‘...Nothing is going according to plan.’

Melchizedek grit its teeth.

Its mother had given it a lot of emotions so it could connect and understand the other beings better, but that wasn't always a good thing.

If it didn't have emotions, then it wouldn't have needed this war for revenge.

It wouldn't tremble in fear of the unknown due to some uncontrollable variable.

'Ugh, at least I've prepared everything. I just... need to finish up.'

Melchizedek chuckled as it looked towards the Kalkuroun Fleet in the sky that was carefully scanning the area.

From the encirclement around the elevator to the preparations made against the Kalkuroun Fleet.

Since the humans could only use the elevator, it just needed to make preparations around it and just stop them there.

At that moment—

—kuooooo!—

—the elevator made a loud noise as it rose up.

'Are they coming? Took longer than I expected.'

Melchizedek chuckled coldly.

Three days had already passed.

It had almost died of boredom, but thanks to that period of time, it had been able to prepare even further.

But as it laughed—

—<Mirmir>'s detection system scanned something unusual in the vicinity.

'Hmm?'

Nelkipa was releasing a strange aura, severely reducing Mimir's

detection ability.

And this was what scared him the most.

If something the size of those powerful humans could manage to hide from their sensors, it had no way of detecting or guarding against them.

But the thing approaching the city was not that small.

It was the size of a mountain.

Then—

Melchizedek's expression turned ugly.

“...You really like fancy fireworks, huh?”

Maybe there was something wrong with its system of emotion.

Since it could never understand the crazy acts that humans did.

—ooooooooo!—

Melchizedek clenched its teeth as it stared towards the distance, at the Main Research Center charging straight for Aokan.

Chapter 359: Breeding City (2)

“Hmm...mmm...”

As they made their way to the third floor, Kiriel made a strange expression as she touched various parts of her armor.

Noticing this, Hansoo asked:

“Is there an issue?”

“No... it’s just...”

Kiriel smiled awkwardly at Hansoo.

Dragon God Armor.

A revolutionary gear that allowed a normal person to fight on the same level as a transcendent.

She’d expected to become at least twice as strong once she equipped it.

No, even stronger than that.

Since she’d be able to use both her strength as well as the Dragon God Armor’s powers.

But the result was a bit different.

As a piece of armor, it was amazing.

The material, its efficiency, as well as the special options inside.

But the core thing was missing.

The energy that controlled the Dragon God Armor.

The ‘battery’ that powered the armor to the point that it could fight evenly against her—it wasn’t included inside.

And it wasn’t like R-Korun Nell had a tremendous amount of energy hidden inside his body like herself—that’s what confused her.

‘Well...I could just use my own energy to power it.’

—ssssk—

Kiriel stared at the armor that had started to glow as she poured energy into it.

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders.

“An internal battery is dangerous in such a dangerous weapon.”

Dragon God Armor.

A weapon that could turn the tide of a large-scale battle in an instant.

The Dragon God Armor received its energy through a transmission.

From the <Fire> within Angkara.

Then—

—rumble—

The elevator stopped moving.

—boom!—

And the sound of something exploding resonated from outside the still-closed elevator doors.

Hansoo spoke to Kiriel:

“Let’s go out.”

‘Hold on for just a bit longer, Enbi Arin.’

Hansoo thought as he glanced at Enbi Arin who was on Kiriel’s back.

.....

—rumble—

“Woah...”

Kiriel whistled at the scene as the doors of the Elevator opened.
She thought back to when the Fusion Reactor had gone through

the Quantum Transmission.

‘If that explosion... if it occurred before my eyes, then this would’ve been the result, huh?’

Back then, she could only see a tiny, flashing star.

But seeing it happen right before her eyes, it was like an apocalypse.

—rumble—

The machines that were apparently prepared to ambush them had all melted down from the Fusion Core explosion.

Kiriel heard Hansoo’s voice as she stared at the sea of flames.

“I’ll leave it to you.”

“Yes.”

Kiriel nodded.

It didn’t seem like they’d bought enough time.

Since she could already see the lights approaching from the distance.

‘There’s no need to get mixed up in something like that.’

The reason why they had blown up the Fusion Core was to buy this small bit of time anyway.

And as Kiriel activated her skill—

—kiiiiing—

—the Dragon God Armor on Kiriel’s body activated with her skill, creating a transparent barrier around her and Hansoo.

The stealth barrier had been useful in the lower floors but was even stronger now, and it quickly hid their presences.

‘Nice. This is quite useful.’

—kiiiiing—

Her spinal area released a strange current of energy that enhanced her skill.

Kiriel smiled at this.

It was like acquiring a very versatile supporter.

Although she had to supply the energy herself, the result wasn't half bad.

—whooosh!—

The second the barrier surrounded them, Kiriel and Hansoo dashed off the ground and headed towards the metal city in the distance.

—swoosh!—

Every step was hundreds of meters long, but Kiriel could only make an expression of discomfort.

‘...What is that?’

A strange fog surrounded the giant city.

Kiriel looked at the scene in front of her with disgust. It didn't look natural at all.

The fog remained undisturbed from the wind created as they ran; there was no way it was natural.

At that moment—

—kiiiiing!—

“...Huh?”

—they felt a strange energy in the distance, above the fog.

Kiriel quickly raised her head and saw the objects floating outside the atmosphere.

‘...So that's the fleet of flames. They've already arrived.’

She hadn't noticed them because it was so far away, plus the giant city in front of her had taken up her full attention.

“Shouldn’t we dodge?”

The concentration of energy from above was not something they could ignore.

The direction of its attack was headed right for their location.

Well, it was aiming for the city, but the strength of such sheer firepower could easily sweep them away too.

Hansoo shook his head.

“If it could get easily swept away from that, it would have long fallen by now.”

Hansoo said leisurely, glancing between Aokan and the fleet above.

.....

In the distance.

A massive amount of energy gathered in front of the flagship of the Kalkuroun Fleet.

Then—

< - - - - >

—a laser beam cut across space and slammed down onto the planet below.

Although it didn’t release a sound, its speed and aura allowed one to estimate the power behind the attack.

The meteor-like strike of that beam was slower than the Photon Strike, but there was a vicious technology implemented onto this attack.

R-Particle Reactive Artillery.

A weapon filled with the R-Particle that reacted with all surrounding matter to quickly fold space.

A tactical weapon used to blow apart giant fortresses or the cores

of small moons.

This weapon, which basically created a miniature black hole, turned everything within a 10 km radius into a singularity the moment it exploded.

But the moment the artillery shell entered the white fog surrounding Aokan, something strange happened.

...chiiii...

The artillery shell quickly lost its momentum.

The attack, which should've turned everything within 10 km of the city into a tiny dot the moment it blew up, quickly fell to the ground.

R-Koronaita Nell mumbled as he looked at the artillery shell, which had cost as much as the yearly income of a large city, turned into a piece of metal.

“...It’s well-built. Whoever built it, they did a very good job.”

The ultimate weapon of electronics—it reacted to anything electronics-related and controlled it.

Neropa Union’s creation, <Mimir>.

Resembling a white fog, it covered a range of several dozen kilometers around Aokan and was made up entirely of nanomachines.

Unauthorized artificial weapons or systems would quickly lose their power and ability to function when they entered the fog.

‘...It really prepared well. Damned brat. What’s really hidden underneath?’

R-Koronaita Nell gritted his teeth as he looked at the giant city, now completely obscured as the fog thickened.

.....

“ ... ”

Kiriel frowned as she noticed that the giant fleet was unable to do anything.

It felt good to thwart the ones above, but she realized that the city before their eyes was not a simple one at all.

Kiriel asked Hansoo:

“Are we going to charge straight in?”

The giant metal walls of the city made it resemble a massive Pandora’s box.

A box that hid countless sorrows, but still attracted many with hope.

To gather crystals, they needed to deal with the Abyssal race inside the walls.

As well as Melchizedek’s forces.

Melchizedek knew their strengths.

And it would have definitely prepared for their arrival.

Hansoo nodded.

“Let’s go.”

“...”

Kiriel nodded at Hansoo’s words.

In order to attain the power to fight on the upper floors, they needed to raise their level in this place anyway.

If they could survive this, both she and Hansoo would at least become a step stronger.

‘Enbi Arin... If she could survive, then it would be a huge help.’

Kiriel clenched her teeth as she felt her mind calming down at the thought of saving a life.

She realized what she was truly feeling.

‘...It’s hard.’

There was no one who could help them.

The world was large, and there were so many enemies.

And there were only two of them.

She'd never truly experienced hardship throughout the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd zones.

Her abilities were quite good, and the rulers of each of those zones were human.

The 4th zone was alright as well.

Although there were many others stronger than herself, she had used her abilities to quickly rise up into a transcendent.

She had no long-term enemies as well.

But the moment she met Hansoo, everything changed.

Of course, she had enemies.

Except her enemies were spread around, preparing to flip the world upside down.

She just didn't know who they were.

Hansoo and his comrades had been fighting them since a long time ago.

And they probably still were.

Melchizedek.

Clementine.

Beings that had the thoughts and the abilities to flip the world many times over.

And as she thought up to this point, Kiriel unconsciously blurted something out.

"If we keep fighting like this, will there ever come a day when we can smile with true happiness?"

It sounded like a complaint, but she felt like she needed to hear

how Hansoo would answer.

If there was no light at the end of this tunnel filled with battles.

This whole fight might lose all meaning.

‘No... Does the tunnel even end?’

Enemies after enemies after enemies.

Go up, enemies.

Look around, enemies.

At this rate, she felt like her mind would end up exhausted even before her physical body could.

Hansoo smiled at Kiriel and asked:

“How were the lower floors?”

Kiriel replied instantly:

“Of course, they were much bett...”

At that moment—

—Kiriel came to a realization, and Hansoo continued: “If we win, this place will become like that. I hope you liked how they were.”

And as she heard this—

—Kiriel felt a spring of emotions burst out from inside her chest.

‘...So that’s what they meant. When they told us that it was like hell.’

She’d deluded herself.

Things hadn’t gotten hard just because she went up.

The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th zones were originally all like this.

It was only that Hansoo and his old comrades had changed it.

Hansoo chuckled at Kiriel, mumbling as he thought of his old comrades who’d had to shoulder these kinds of jobs because of him.

“If you make bad friends, you will suffer. It’s not too late. There’s nothing really good... about having a friend like me, you see.”

Hansoo looked at Enbi Arin with a bitter expression and then gazed upwards.

‘I wonder... What are you guys doing now? Just wait a bit longer. There are a few things I need to smash apart before I get there.’

Hansoo’s bitter expression soon turned ice-cold as he stared at Melchizedek’s metal box.

Chapter 360: Breeding City (3)

“Are you really going to go in with me?”

Kiriell chuckled at Hansoo’s question.

“I want to leave my name in the history books as well. Are you trying to take all the glory?”

Hansoo scoffed at Kiriell and then nodded.

“Fine. We’ll tell them to write it all in detail.”

Kiriell fastened Enbi Arin on her back even tighter after receiving Hansoo’s permission.

—chaaarrrrrk—

Various skills from Kiriell’s body protected Enbi Arin and kept her in place.

She’d even thought of hiding her somewhere, but leaving her behind in some random place in the middle of a battlefield wouldn’t be the best plan.

Especially since a random patrol robot could destroy Enbi Arin with her current status.

‘I’ll protect her for now.’

Hansoo was stronger than her, but Hansoo was someone who fought in the frontlines like a madman. It didn’t suit him to take care of a patient.

She, a support-type fighter who fought from the backlines, was a much better choice to carry Enbi Arin around.

Kiriell asked Hansoo:

“...Are we charging straight through the doors?”

Kiriell glanced at the city surrounded by the white fog.

Suppressing her fear.

Hansoo nodded.

“Yes. Don’t worry so much. We’re not the only ones going in.”

“...Are there other allies?”

Hansoo pointed towards the sky and said:

“Well, they aren’t exactly allies.”

The fleet of flames was within sight high above the sky.

.....

R-Koronaita Nell.

A man whose abilities were acknowledged at the age of 8, thus gaining the right to control the Flame.

He had earned military merits in the battle against Pompeion at the age of 20 and then became a Dragon God Soldier.

He had risen to become the owner of a fleet at the age of 34, a powerful and high-ranked position even within the Neropa Union.

It was an unbelievable rate of promotion, a rare sight even within the history books of Angkara’s long chronology.

Although there were a few rivals during his younger days, there were no more rivals when he turned 52, his current age.

Most had either died, come under his command, or replaced.

R-Koronaita Nell looked down at Aokan with cold eyes.

‘I have to win.’

He could not lose.

Although he had lost small battles in the past, he had won every single one of the more important ones.

This was why he’d been able to rise to the position of the youngest fleet master as well as gain the rights to lead this giant fleet of flames.

And this battle was definitely not a small one.

“Melchizedek, you annoying metal brat.”

R-Koronaita Nell mumbled.

There was no more time to waste.

At this rate, he didn't know what that kid Melchizedek would do since it was already slowly devouring the Nelkipa.

Although it was a brat, it wasn't stupid.

For some reason, it had brought the fight to their home planet.

For that thing, who knew the power of Angkara more than anyone, to bring the fight to their home ground, it meant that something was backing it up and giving it the confidence to do so.

‘And... that something is probably this.’

R-Koronaita Nell frowned at the giant ray flying towards their home planet even while under attack from artillery fire.

They could not land.

Since even their ships would lose their abilities once they got within Mimir's range.

Although they wouldn't completely stop due to their AI defensive systems, it would leave them in a weakened state.

‘And if he attacked during that time, it would only make matters gruesome.’

But they couldn't watch forever.

R-Koronaita Nell ordered N-Akuon below him.

“Send out all the Dragon God Soldiers.”

“All nine?”

Nine was a huge amount, even within the Nell family.

Looking annoyed at the shock in N-Akuon's voice, R-Koronaita Nell replied: “Yes. All nine. We brought them with us in case of a situation like this. It's time to use them.”

‘Such a slow kid.’

Although it was mechanical armor, half of it was biological anyway.

Plus the Dragon God Armor could work inside the Mimir as long as it was under the control of the Dragon God Soldier.

The Dragon God Armor was actually the force they would’ve used in case the Aokan ever formed a rebellion.

‘Although I didn’t expect to find things like that roaming around.’

—kyaaaak!—

R-Koronaita Nell frowned at seeing strange monsters shoving something inside the human’s stomachs and then shouted: “Descend! Find out what it’s hiding inside and stop the Mimir! That’s the only way the fleet can approach!”

One of the Dragon God Soldiers, who was preparing to go down, asked: <What shall we do about the aliens?>

R-Koronaita Nell didn’t even flinch as he said: “Think of them as wild animals. You are now going through a jungle. Although there’s no need to kill them... there’s no point in overlooking the things that annoy us.”

The Dragon God Soldier smiled as if he’d expected R-Koronaita Nell’s answer.

<Understood.>

Soon—

—swoosh!—

—nine beams of light descended downwards.

And R-Koronaita Nell smiled as he looked at the nine descending meteors.

‘Melchizedek, I wonder what your expression will look like when

your head gets taken apart piece-by-piece?’

Would it make a similar expression as the countless rivals that had lost to him?

Or would it make an expression like those whose heads he’d taken off?

Because of his status as a fleet master, he’d hidden this secret, but it was one of his greatest hobbies.

R-Koronaita Nell looked forward to that moment and looked down at Aokan beneath him.

.....

“Nine are coming down.”

—kiririririk—

Kiriel could see nine meteors with her enhanced vision.

And her already skill-enhanced vision was further enhanced through the lens on the visor.

‘They’re all strong.’

At Kiriel’s level, observing their simple movements was enough to show their strength.

Even while falling from the sky, they looked laid-back but were still very much on their guard.

‘They don’t look simple.’

And at that moment—

—kiiiiiiing!—

—something started to shoot out from their bodies.

And as the biomechanical grenades landed—

—boomboomboomboom!—

—giant explosions occurred as they swept past their landing position.

Looking at the scene, Hansoo said:

“Let’s go in now.”

“Yes.”

With that much chaos, all attention would focus on them.

And Hansoo reminded Kiriel before heading off: “You remember, right? We’ll separate once we go in.”

Kiriel gulped at those words but nodded as she replied: “I know.”

There were two types of enemies they had to fight inside.

Melchizedek’s forces and the Abyssal beings.

The best scenario would be to just kill the Abyssal beasts, gain crystals, raise herself and Enbi Arin to a 3-Star and then go up.

Of course, Melchizedek wouldn’t just sit by and watch.

But if they only focused on Melchizedek’s forces, Enbi Arin might die, or they might get swept away by something else.

So they had chosen this:

Hansoo would attract Melchizedek's attention, and while he dealt with its forces, Kiriel would roam the city and hunt the Abyssal beings.

If they could end it fast and quickly get up to 3-Star, then that would be the best outcome.

Of course in this life, not everything goes according to one’s wishes.

‘Haa...’

As Kiriel gulped, Hansoo started to cover himself in skills.

In order to charge in first.

‘Kiriel, I believe in you.’

She would do well.

She was a smart girl.

He just needed to do one thing.

Let Kiriel move freely.

Then—

—kiriririk!—

—blue particles started to seep out from underneath Hansoo's skin.

The crystalline particles hidden between his bones, his veins, and his muscles, seeped out and covered his skin.

And the Ark Roa's crystal filled in the space between the pieces of armor.

A blue armor quickly covered Hansoo's body.

And as the blue armor compressed aHansoo's body, it made a gleeful sound by creating friction with the armor pieces.

Then—

—pushuk!—

—shukshuk!—

Hundreds of tiny spines shot out from various parts of its body and embedded themselves into Hansoo's body.

As if the Ark-Roa's energy wasn't enough, the blue armor started frenziedly sucking Hansoo's energy out through the spines attached to his body.

And as the extra energy around various parts of Hansoo's body got sucked into the armor— —kiiiiing!—

—the mana jade resting inside him acted up as it started to pour out mana.

Activating the Immortal Soul, which started regenerating the sucked-out life force.

Hansoo smiled as he felt what was currently happening inside his body.

‘Good, very good.’

A normal human being would probably die once their life force ran out but it was a nice stimulus for him.

It tensed up his entire body and accelerated his movements.

And as if his brain’s sleeping defense mechanisms had determined that the blue armor’s actions were life-threatening, it started hastily secreting adrenaline throughout his body.

Hansoo’s body soon transformed into something that was ideal for smashing things apart.

As if the armor was trying to prove that it wasn’t a thief, it started emitting a bright light as it sucked in Hansoo’s energy.

—kiiiiing!—

Explosive strength squirmed around his body.

And his senses were elevated to the point where he couldn’t bear to stand still anymore.

Hansoo spoke to Kiriel:

“I’m... going ahead.”

Then—

—boooooom!—

—Hansoo’s bright body flew off into the fog like a meteor.

And soon—

—boooooooooom!—

—a huge sound reverberated as a massive earthquake, much larger than the one from the previous explosions, shook the entire city.

.....

—rumble!—

A few females woke up from the tremendous earthquake.

And this included Ariel, whose mouth had been defiled by that insectoid monster.

‘Ugh...’

Ariel woke up with a much thinner face than before, and she looked to where the vibration had originated from, but then soon let her head droop.

‘I’m going to sleep. I just want to sleep.’

She didn’t want to think.

She didn’t want to do anything.

Ariel lay back down with a soulless expression and started to sleep again.

At that moment—

—kirrrk—

A strange noise resounded from inside Ariel’s stomach.

No, from inside the hundreds of females lying near Ariel.

‘You should sleep, too.’

Ariel caressed the thing making the strange noise inside her stomach and then fell asleep again.

Chapter 361: Bomb (1)

—boooooom!—

“Woah... What are these things, Captain?”

R-Libera Nell spoke towards the leader up front, R-Zairon Nell, muttering as he looked around.

Although they had seen it briefly from above, seeing it up close was different.

Kyaaaaaak!

“What the hell... Isn’t this just an insect hive?”

—boooooom!—

R-Libera Nell mumbled as he smashed away the strange creature that charged towards him and thought: The separated section of the city.

Nothing lived in this part of the city.

Other than the insects, of course.

‘Ugh...’

Kyaaaaaak!

As he dealt with the strange insects jumping at him, R-Libera Nell could see the countless women lying on the floor, with their stomachs burst wide open.

Although they were aliens, they looked just like them on the outside.

‘Tsk.’

The scene made R-Libera Nell feel uncomfortable, and he checked the status of the Dragon God Armor, lifting up one of his barrels.

—whoooosh!—

Powerful flames swept over the corpses on the ground.

—flicker—flicker—

The leader, R-Zairon Nell, frowned at this scene.

Not because of the flaming corpses, but rather from R-Libera Nell's actions.

“Save your energy, there aren't much now but we don't know what will happen.”

A giant city with a diameter of 41 km, Angkara.

They had merely entered one of the hundreds of sectors within the city.

And the location they had to reach was the very center of this giant city.

Looking at the situation on the outskirts of the city, the inner parts of the city would definitely be abnormal as well.

It was best to preserve their energy.

Since nobody knew what would happen.

At R-Zairon Nell's words, R-Libera Nell started to make excuses, an awkward expression on his face.

“No... uh... well, you don't know what could happen, right? They might crawl out from inside those corpses too.”

Kyaaaak!

And R-Libera Nell fired at an insect that had just crawled out from a woman's corpse.

—boom!—

“Look! They might ambush us from behind, so dealing with the roots like this is important.”

“...”

R-Zairon Nell shook his head.

‘Imbeciles, they never listen.’

They were royals of the royals from the three families.

They had gained approval for their abilities and had reached the level of a Dragon God Soldier.

They were born with a silver spoon in their mouths, and they had killed and massacred in place of learning manners.

Actually, it would be weird if their personalities were normal.

He had only become their leader because he’d fought longer and was a bit stronger, so he wasn’t someone who could fully control these guys.

‘Fine. Fine, let’s just do it your way.’

R-Zairon Nell decided just to let loose.

He was a bit disgusted as well.

“Kuhuk... ugh.”

R-Zairon Nell wore a disgusted expression as he looked at the crawling alien woman.

Well, at the woman’s destination.

‘...Disgusting.’

In the center of the sector was a giant container.

And below it, there seemed to be a mechanism that looked like it was meant to feed them.

The mechanism seemed to constantly drop something to the container at the bottom.

A mysterious-looking feed.

“Ahhh...ah...”

“Ugh...”

The infected women were continuously shoveling food into their mouths.

As if they were never satisfied.

It was not something that someone would do when they had a giant hole in their stomach which insects kept crawling out from.

A strange sight indeed.

A panel appeared before R-Zairon Nell's eyes, and he found out the feed's ingredients.

—tiriririk—

'T-HTD and Hydrogen. Growth accelerator... A weakening agent and anesthesia.'

Until now, he had thought the women were acting crazy because of those strange creatures inside their stomachs.

But apparently, he was wrong.

The chemicals within that feed were messing with the minds of the women.

So they wouldn't be able to feel the hole in their stomachs and would only focus on eating.

And he realized why the feed was packed full of nutrients and growth accelerators.

'It's not to fatten up the women...'

Kyaaaa!

Insects continued to crawl out from inside the woman's stomach.

Cells were dividing at hundreds of times their normal speed inside the woman's stomach.

And as they supported this growth, the alien woman continued to shovel the feed into her mouth to compensate this loss of energy and nutrients.

As if she would die if she stopped.

—chomp! chomp! chomp! —

The powerless bodies continued to feed themselves as they supported the birth of the strange monsters.

R-Zairon Nell frowned at seeing their numbers continue to multiply, and he aimed with his Dragon God Armor.

—booooooom!—

A huge sound occurred as it destroyed the pen containing the women.

“Woah, captain. You just told us not to waste our energy just a second ago, hehe.”

R-Zairon Nell frowned at R-Libera Nell’s snickering and then warned the others.

“I’m just making a path for us. We... we might need to fall back. If these things have multiplied, then this might become troublesome.”

A few of the Dragon God Soldiers asked in shock: “Huh? Captain, are you insane? Aren’t you going to listen to the fleet commander?”

‘Securing an escape path? Is he saying we might need to run away?’

The commander had told them that they needed to breach the center and figure out what Melchizedek was hiding.

Although they, the Dragon God Soldiers, were at an extremely high position in the Neropa Union, the fleet commander, R-Korinaita Nell, was different.

That man was a level above themselves, who were already at the peak of the ladder.

Although they were a bit arrogant, they were still a part of Neropa’s military.

If they went against military laws and didn't follow the orders of the fleet commander, then they would get in trouble.

And R-Zairon Nell shook his head.

‘Retards.’

Born as geniuses and accepted by the Dragon God Armor, and yet their visions were still too limited.

Although a soldier should focus more on their duties today rather than surviving until tomorrow, they should still care about their own lives.

—kacha!—

R-Zairon Nell crushed one of the bugs beneath his feet and picked it up with his hands.

“Look. Look at these things.”

“What the hell are you doing?!”

The Dragon God Soldiers freaked out as he brought half of the insect closer to them while it spewed out a green liquid.

Some even stepped backward.

But looking at the serious Zairon holding up the insect, they approached him again and inspected it.

‘Ugh... Why is he telling us to look at it? It looks weak. We can just sweep past it.’

Although the process of birth was disgusting, it was just some random insect.

Couldn't they just massacre them all on the way there?

Its body was made up of three parts and had eight legs.

Sharp legs made to cut meat, with extremely powerful muscles for an insect.

But that wasn't all.

—didididik—

Information continued to display on R-Libera Nell's panel, one after another.

<...Metamorphosis under way.>

<Integrating alien DNA...>

<Probability of evolution...99.4%>

Something was constantly squirming inside their hard exoskeletons as its body continued to change.

Their outer shells kept shedding off as it made new shells underneath.

And the Dragon God Soldier's expression froze at the sight.

.....

—rumble!—

A bright light exploded outwards, and lightning smashed down onto the ground.

Unlike the Dragon God Soldiers, who were creating escape routes while slowly advancing— —Hansoo merely continued to charge deeper and deeper like a madman.

—boom!—

Even if he blew off their heads, the infected would continue to move.

To continue to breed the Abyssal race, <Quirae>.

Only after burning both the outer and inside forms of the infected to a crisp could one stop their movements.

“Ahh...”

“Ugh..”

Even as she fell, the woman continued to push the <Quirae> coming out of their stomachs to Hansoo.

Their actions weren't an attack.

“Ahh...Ah...”

Kyaaak!

Hansoo glanced at the woman holding the insect gnawing on her hands.

It wasn't just because of the drugs.

These women seriously thought that these insects were their children.

The Quirae had already infected their brains.

“Please... this child...”

Hansoo nodded and received the Quirae, staring at the woman handing over the insect even while her own body burned up.

“Ahh...”

Hansoo looked at the brightening expression of the woman after he'd received the Quirae, and he thought: ‘...Rest in peace.’

—boom!—

The woman's head was gone.

Hansoo stared at the fallen woman and then clenched his right hand.

Kyaaak!

After blowing up the Quirae in his hand, Hansoo clenched his hammer tightly.

‘You really have gone too far.’

Hansoo gazed towards the distant center of the giant city, towards the one who had caused all this.

There was something he didn't understand.

‘...He doesn't even control them.’

Melchizedek had only focused on raising them. It didn't look like it had any thoughts of controlling them.

It would be a tremendous force if it could control the Quirae.

No.

The <Quirae>, if raised properly, could be among the most powerful races even within the Abyss.

—boooooom!—

'They would be useful... so where is Melchizedek planning to use them?'

Hansoo created a hole in the wall, looking at the scene beyond it.

Kyaaak!

Unlike the insects from before, these things had a different appearance.

Maybe they had grown up, but these things looked half-human and half-insect.

Hansoo charged towards them.

.....

"Mmm..."

R-Zairon Nell continued to speak.

"This is just a newborn. The issue is, we don't know how far they can grow."

"..."

"These things could be crawling in that place, isn't it better to be reprimanded under military law instead of becoming some insect's meal inside this place?"

"..."

The Dragon God Soldiers nodded to themselves.

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

They started to fire their weapons in every direction.

To not leave behind a single trace.

Kyaaaak!

Ahhhh!

The screams of the insects and the aliens filled up the surrounding space.

Some of the Dragon God Soldiers frowned as they heard this.

The Dragon God Soldier continued to fire their attacks.

If they let these things survive...

The place they were standing in might end up swarming with these insects by the time they escaped.

If they were running away, it meant the situation was already in a horrible state.

If their escape path ended up blocked then it would make things even worse.

—chiiiiik—

R-Zairon glanced at their surroundings, which had turned to dust, and said: “Proceed to the next sector.”

‘Anyway, what is this crystal? These things keep dropping.’

A weird crystal dropped whenever they killed the insects.

R-Zairon Nell then shook his head at the thousands of crystals that even his armor’s panel couldn’t detect the properties of.

‘Well, I guess I can take a few of these back to the researchers.’

And soon—

—tatatata—

R-Zairon Nell and the other Dragon God Soldiers quickly dashed

away.

“Mmm...”

Somebody approached the location they'd just vacated and picked up a crystal from the floor.

Chapter 362: Bomb (2)

Kyaaaaaaak!

—kuduk!—

Hansoo frowned at the sensation on his fingertips as he destroyed the countless monsters.

Before, he could kill these things even with the barest touch of his lightning.

But not now.

The hard shells.

And the energy that flowed beneath them.

The skills they subconsciously released to survive.

Because they had fused their hard shells with a human's positive traits, he now had to smash them apart one-by-one.

—crunch!—

—boooooom!—

A tremendous amount of insectoids were charging at him to get past his hammer.

Hansoo continued to smash away at these monsters that continued to jump at him, seeing if they could land a single bite.

Although their shells had hardened, it was barely enough to withstand his thunder.

With every swing, their shells exploded, and their inner flesh blew apart.

As well as their claws.

...SSS...

As the bright energy from his blue armor touched their claws, they melted away like butter in a hot pan.

Even if their claws were tightly hardened, it was useless.

—rumble!—

The bright energy surrounding his blue armor melted everything that approached his surroundings.

And even if they got through, it wouldn't matter so much.

—crunch!—

“Kyaaaaaak!”

The half-human, half-insect-like monster screamed after seeing the state of its hand, which had broke into pieces after attacking Hansoo's armor.

An even harder armor than the Quirae's hardened body.

“It's not bad.”

—boom!—

Hansoo said to himself, sending the Quirae flying.

‘At this rate, it looks like it won't be long before I arrive.’

If he took things slow, then it would probably take about a day.

Just about a day until he reached the central area of the city.

Although his speed was decreasing because of how fast the armor sucked away his energy, the armor was truly living up to its worth.

He could recover his lost mana after a bit of rest once the fight ended.

As long as he continued like this, then it was perfect.

Either he would arrive first, or Kiriell would finish healing Enbi Arin and join him.

One or way another, things would end.

—crunch!—

But as he slammed them away one by one—

—a change occurred in the distance.

“Kyaaak!”

One of them had stopped attacking Hansoo and had started to devour its surrounding members.

—chomp!—

One of the Quirae next to it got devoured in an instant.

It took no less than ten seconds to devour something that was as big as itself.

And this was thanks to its still insect-like stomach opening wide—like a mouth turned sideways—and swallowing its nearby comrade in one bite.

The weirdest thing was, the one it ate didn't put up any resistance.

No, it was the exact opposite.

“Kyaaaak!”

Hundreds of Quirae split up into two groups and moved in a very organized manner.

Half of them started to charge towards Hansoo and frenziedly blocked his path.

While the other half started to throw themselves in front of that one special Quirae while taking apart their shells.

As if they were handing over their bodies to that one Quirae.

And thanks to its painstaking efforts in taking apart the shells of its comrades, the speed of the special one rose by a massive amount.

—chomp!—

—kuduk!—

Strangely, the size of its body didn't change at all.

Going by the logic of physics, its body should have at least multiplied dozens of times over since it had devoured hundreds of its own kind.

No, there was a different change instead.

...SSSSS...

The insect parts of its body quickly disappeared as a humanoid appearance replaced them.

No, the appearance itself became similar to Hansoo's.

A humanoid, but with a hard outer shell.

—kuduk!—

After so much compression, the scarlet-looking shells had turned almost black.

Hansoo chuckled.

“It seems I’ve made quite an impression.”

Then—

“D...Die.”

—boom!—

—the evolved Quirae charged towards Hansoo in a crazed manner.

.....

—rumble!—

Melchizedek looked amused as it heard the loud sounds coming from both sides of the city.

“I really cannot understand them, both sides.”

One side came from the wilderness.

The other from a battlefield.

But shouldn't they at least keep their manners at a time like this?

Melchizedek clenched its teeth.

Originally, it shouldn't have turned out like this.

Once it finished digging out the legacy, it just needed to take this giant thing and head towards Ankara.

The Kalkuroun Fleet flying above was all within its plans as well.

Except for Clementine's sudden betrayal.

As well as the sudden appearance of that little monster called Hansoo.

Every one of its forces was important, but because of these damned bastards, it could not get them to complete the most important task.

'Well, maybe this is for the best.'

Melchizedek looked at the hole beneath its feet and thought to itself.

Although no one could see it from beyond the giant metal walls of Aokan, the hole beneath it was hundreds of meters wide in diameter and so deep that one couldn't even see the bottom.

But it wasn't completely dark.

Since a bright blue light was continuously radiating out from somewhere within its depths.

Although it was a bit too deep, the light was so intense that it had even reached Melchizedek's location.

And below the metal city, thousands of thick tubes were connected in a complex manner.

Just like veins.

Melchizedek looked at the light and thought of Hansoo.

'You... are probably thinking of using this place to become stronger, right?'

Its opponent was a transcendent.

According to what it knew, that man had to devour crystals to become stronger.

Its aim in coming here was also for the monsters grown by Melchizedek.

But at this rate, things didn't look good.

Since this giant creature was a very precious <Bomb> that it had painstakingly created.

'Time to begin.'

With its hand that was made entirely of nanomachines, Melchizedek smiled as it caressed the floor.

It didn't matter what Hansoo did.

Since it had already finished its preparations.

And as Melchizedek willed.

—swoosh!—

Vast amounts of energy were sucked out from a mysterious location in the depths.

The translucent tubes turned extremely bright.

Due to the energy that was flowing through them.

Then—

—boooooom!—

—beneath Mimir, the giant tower that Melchizedek had been standing on, a mechanism made loud noises as it activated.

It was the fusion reactor located beneath Mimir.

Melchizedek smiled as the fusion reactor filled up with energy, and then turned its head towards a specific direction in the city.

'I will turn it all to hell. All of it.'

...sssssk...

Melchizedek's fake body turned transparent and disappeared as it continued to smile.

—rumble—

And in its place was only the sound of a machine, loud enough to shake the entire metal city.

.....

“Not bad.”

Hansoo mumbled as he looked at the ripped-apart pieces of the Quirae beneath his feet.

The evolved Quirae had succeeded in reaching past the blue-armor's light.

No, it had even succeeded in dealing a significant amount of damage.

‘No, maybe it's because they're Quirae... But is Melchizedek really not going to control them?’

If these guys continued to multiply and grow their strength, they'd be hard to control even for Melchizedek.

Since it wasn't a god.

The Abyssal beings were not something one could ignore.

As Hansoo whistled at his cracked armor—

—boom!—

—a loud noise occurred in the distance.

At the same time, the shockwaves of a very familiar sensation swept past his location.

Quantum Transmission.

But its sheer size was different from that of the research center.

And then—

Hansoo realized what Melchizedek had been planning the whole time.

‘...Is it planning to warp them? To Ankara?’

And Hansoo frowned, realizing why Melchizedek wasn’t controlling them.

If Melchizedek was planning to take this entire city apart into pieces and throwing the Quirae at Ankara, there was no need to control them.

Since the Quirae would follow their instincts and continue to multiply.

As long as nothing prevented them from multiplying, these things would increase their numbers at a monstrous speed.

Using the other race as hosts or even food.

It used races with DNA that would be useful if integrated, and then used inferior species as food.

Solely focusing on multiplying at a tremendous speed as seen from before.

And if successful, Melchizedek would be at an absolute advantage in the war against Ankara.

Since it would be hard to focus on the invasion of outer forces if they turned their home ground upside down.

—rumble!—

Hansoo frowned at the sounds that were occurring around him.

‘There’s not enough time.’

Hansoo thought to himself as he felt the faint shockwaves from the Quantum Transmission.

The entire city trembled as if there wasn’t enough energy, but the transmission would soon happen.

Probably within a few hours.

So he had to decide.

Whether to stop this transmission.

Or escape a place that would soon get sent away.

If he did escape?

‘...Enbi Arin would die.’

And the next issue.

There was no other place he could gather these many crystals in a short time.

This place was the best location for strengthening themselves.

But staying in this place and fighting was also an issue.

If he failed to find the Quantum Transmission and got sent away?

They would be stuck on Angkara along with this city.

‘A bit too difficult at this moment.’

Both had risks.

But Hansoo was able to make a decision.

‘Stop it.’

This giant city was a bomb that could be used for Melchizedek’s revenge, but for him, it would be a location for his growth.

And if he left?

They would need to spend a tremendous amount of time and effort in order to reach the level of a 3-Star Transcendent and continue upwards.

And of course, Clementine would not wait kindly for him.

Nelkipa would have long reached Angkara and end up causing a tremendous ruckus.

Hansoo breathed in and out.

‘My Immortal Soul, you’ll need to work a bit harder.’

...SSSSS...

Hansoo released the limiter on the spines embedded on his body which he'd been suppressing with his mana.

At that moment—

—rumble—

The blue armor surrounding Hansoo's body screamed in glee and squirmed intensely.

He'd released the limiter he'd set to prevent the armor from continuously sucking away at his mana.

Which meant that it could eat more, right?

The blue armor trembled in joy.

—crunch!—

The armor's smooth surface turned bumpy, and its thickness increased.

Even more vicious, and denser than before.

The heavy-armor style of the armor had now turned into a full plate armor.^[a]

Hansoo felt his Immortal Soul acting up in a crazed manner and thought: 'I guess... the other guys will have to suffer for a bit.'

Those guys would have to suffer countless times more than him.

Since they wouldn't have a choice of leaving or staying, unlike himself.

Hansoo chuckled as he thought of the Dragon God Soldiers that would be somewhere in this city.

.....

<If you back up, then this will land on that Planet. No matter what, succeed in your mission. The moment you back off, we will stop supplying energy to your Dragon God Armor.> “...”

R-Zairon Nell's expression turned dark when he heard the message.

[a]Heavy armor is the kind of armor you see that has the majority of body parts covered in metal pieces which are interlinked with other materials such as hardened leather or scale mail. Full plate armor is similar to something a medieval knight might've worn, an armor that is almost entirely made of metal.

Chapter 363: Bomb (3)

‘Dammit... Where is it heading to now?’

R-Zairon Nell checked the coordinates of the Quantum Transmission and made a dumbfounded expression.

382 places.

382 coordinates, all located on Angkara.

The metropolis.

Large areas of inhabitants.

Research cities.

Military bases.

Every single one of the densely-populated and important locations.

Not caring whether it was from the Neropa Union or Pompeion.

R-Zairon Nell freaked out as he looked at the fragments of bugs in front of his eyes.

‘These... these things are going to fall on our planet?’

Kyaaaaak!

“These damned bastards! Why are their shells so hard?!”

“Hey! If you’ve got time to speak, then kill more of them!”

—boom!—

He could hear the voices of his teammates fighting the half-insect, half-human creatures.

They’d wasted their artillery before because they didn’t want to approach them, and it had worked back then.

But they didn’t have the leisure to anymore.

The artillery wasn’t effective anymore, and there was no energy

to spare.

—crunch!—

—boom!—

His subordinates were now ignoring the green liquid that they'd hated so much and were crazily swinging the plasma blades equipped on their Dragon God Armor.

‘These things are going to fall...’

Zairon continued to repeat this phrase over and over again.

They'd managed to slice them apart because they were Dragon God Soldiers, but only just barely.

But with a normal weapon or a normal soldier?

They wouldn't be able to leave a single scratch.

These things that only Dragon God Soldiers could handle were going to land on their planet.

Things that could multiply at this rate and become this powerful with just meat.

If these things fell onto a city occupied by millions of people and used them all as food?

And used that food to multiply?

Zairon felt a chill run down his entire body as he thought of this point.

‘No... It'll be an apocalypse.’

With their fleet of flames and the power of their ‘Flame’, they wouldn't lose.

But what should they do?

Would they need to burn down entire cities and kill all the innocent people there?

Combining the population of the people in those coordinates, it

was a bit over four billion.

“Melchizedek... YOU DAMNED TIN CAN!”

—booom!—

R-Zairon Nell roared in rage as he destroyed the bugs around him.

—chiiiiik!—

Something crawled out from beneath him, making mechanical sounds.

‘...What is this?’

A metal pillar with thin screens around it.

It wasn’t that weird since this entire city was like a large machine.

But the important thing was who had sent it to him, in this insect-filled city.

As R-Zairon Nell made a confused expression—

—chiiijik!—

—the panels made a noise as words appeared on them.

.....

—rumble!—

‘...They’re getting stronger and stronger.’

—crunch!—

Kiriel groaned inwardly as she fought.

Their strength kept increasing.

This was the third type of monster.

She’d initially fought on the outskirts of the city, but she soon realized that the quality of the monsters in the deeper parts was better and had gone there instead.

But the ones deeper in were really powerful.

‘These aren’t things I can deal with on a whim.’

—crunch!—

“Phew...”

Kiriell frowned after barely managing to defeat one monster.

The first type was an insect.

The second type was half-insect and half-human.

The third type wore armor, and they weren’t at all easy to defeat.

Which meant that if she proceeded deeper, it would lessen her efficiency in gaining crystals.

It was better if she stayed around the shelters with 2nd and 3rd-type monsters.

‘I don’t know what to do.’

A familiar wave radiated out from the center of the city.

‘Melchizedek, that crazy bastard. Planning to send away the whole city...’

If she wanted to help, then she needed to head towards Hansoo’s location right this instant.

If she was going to continue growing, she needed to focus on hunting on the outskirts of the city.

Looking at it from the long term, the second choice was a much better option.

Since becoming a 3-Star Transcendent and then proceeding to help him was much better than going over right now.

Kiriell made some calculations and then came to a decision.

‘...No. I’ll have to go and help.’

No matter how she thought about it, there was not enough time to rise to a 3-Star Transcendent within the allotted period.

It was a good thing to have monsters swarm together like this.

Since it would be hard to find monsters packed this densely.

To find these many monsters, they'd need to comb through the wild for months.

But the issue was, the numbers were too dense.

It wasn't as if they could kill off the enemy with a simple sweep of a broom.

There was a limit to how much she could fight on her own.

'I need at least twice my current strength.'

If she couldn't rise to a 3-Star in time anyway, it was better to go help Hansoo to stop the transmission and then fight in leisure.

—crack!—

Kiriel finished off the monsters jumping at her and started to head towards the familiar aura.

At that moment—

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

—from the location opposite to Kiriel's destination, a large explosion had occurred at a wall.

'What the hell.'

Kiriel frowned as she saw who was coming out from the newly-created hole.

Nine Dragon God Soldiers.

Rough breaths.

Red eyes.

Body postures that were ready to pounce on something at any moment.

Being covered from head to toe in a green liquid, they still seemed enraged from their previous battle.

‘...Ugh, this might get ugly. I don’t have time for this.’

One soldier, she could deal with.

No, since she’d gained the Dragon God Armor, it would be quite easy to handle one soldier.

But nine?

And if she had someone to protect behind her back?

That was a different story.

Especially since their individual abilities seemed to be higher than that R-Korun Nell that she’d previously dealt with.

‘But... if I have to fight, then I will.’

Kiriel tightly grasped the fang in her hand as her Dragon God Armor released a white steam.

But then—

“No! Please! We aren’t here to fight! Calm down!”

“...?”

—one man jumped out from behind the Dragon God Soldiers and shouted.

‘...Who the hell is that?’

Unlike the fully-armored nine, the man looked like he didn’t have any battle prowess whatsoever.

Kiriel made a confused expression.

.....

“So... you want to make an alliance? Temporarily?”

R-Zairon Nell barely managed to reply to Kiriel’s confused questioning.

“Yes, According to him, we seem to have the same goals. We can work together until then.”

After saying the words that hurt his pride, R-Zairon Nell looked at the researcher-like man standing next to him.

No, he was an actual scientist of the Technorat branch.

‘N-Aroel.’

He’d heard of him before.

The man with the same level of ability as N-Akuon, the leader of the Technorats.

Being the leader of all technical-related things on the Kalkuroun fleet was an immensely high position.

If he didn’t have that ability, then he would’ve long lost his life from the rage of a Nell family member.

And being on the same level as that N-Akuon, that was not something so simple.

‘I heard they sent him away due to some past incidents... It seems they sent him to be the leader of the Aokan.’

Then it made sense.

As to how he’d survived without any battle prowess while at Aokan, which had become as close as possible to a living hell.

For the leader of all technology in Aokan, he would know all its mechanisms and structures.

‘Well, it doesn’t seem as simple as that.’

R-Zairon Nell was at a loss as he looked at N-Aroel, who looked like he’d crawled out of a sewer.

Dirty, tattered robes and an overgrown beard.

Strange-colored skin as well as various machines attached to his back.

In comparison to N-Akuon, who was living an almost germophobic life on the Kalkuroun fleet, he looked well-prepared.

N-Aroel looked embarrassed at R-Zairon Nell's stare but soon focused on the task at hand.

"It seems you also have a job to fulfill, right?"

"...?"

"You have come for the crystals, correct?"

Kiriel frowned at this.

'Was he spying on me?'

But she hadn't felt anyone watching her.

N-Aroel seemed to have read Kiriel's thoughts and quickly shook his head.

"No, I didn't spy on you or anything. We've just studied you over a long period of time, so we kind of realized a few action patterns. All the strong members of your kind seem to be looking for crystals. And there's no other reason for you to enter this dangerous city."

"Hmm."

Correct to a degree.

N-Aroel continued to speak as he watched Kiriel.

"The Quantum Transmission has been activated. And... I believe there will be many more things we can do if we form an alliance. And it wouldn't be a waste of time, either. These crystals are important to you, correct? We have no use for them whatsoever."

N-Aroel looked at Kiriel and said:

"You can take the crystals and help us stop the transmission. It's not bad, right?"

"Not bad, you guys really are trying hard."

N-Aroel made a bitter expression at Kiriel's words.

"It has been a very long time since I've been trapped in this place, living like a rat. I have... seen a lot of things. As to what kind of beings these things are."

Kiriel and all the Dragon God Soldiers all made similar expressions of understanding.

It was only for a short while, but that was more than enough time to know what kind of creatures those things were.

N-Aroel continued to speak with a heavy expression.

"Look, imagine these things falling down onto a whole planet. To our planet. How could we not try hard?"

R-Zairon Nell looked at N-Aroel with a respectful gaze.

'I must remember this kid.'

N-Aroel glanced around and then continued to speak.

"There... is a secret tunnel here. Of course, there'll be a lot of Quirae along the way, but... We'll be able to get to the center much faster. I will lead you there, and you may take all the crystals you find along the way..."

"If you're heading to the center, I didn't come here alone, you see."

N-Aroel shook his head when he heard Kiriel speak about joining up with Hansoo.

"No, we won't go that way. We'll go a different way."

"Huh? Why?"

Instead of Kiriel, R-Zairon Nell was the one who asked.

Logically, it was better to group up with the other man and head into the depths.

N-Aroel screamed.

"Dammit...! We cannot go there! No matter what!"

“...”

Everyone looked questioningly at N-Aroel's reaction.

.....

—boooom!—

‘It's really not easy.’

Hansoo thought to himself.

He thought it'd be easy to breach the center while wearing the blue armor, but it seems like he'd overestimated himself.

‘4th-level. Hmm.’

“Haha... kekeke.”

Hansoo frowned as he looked at the 4th-level evolution of the Quirae before his eyes.

Being a 4th-level wasn't an issue.

He'd thought the Quirae only devoured humans.

Then there wouldn't be much of an issue.

Since their strength relied on what they ate.

But the one that appeared before his eyes had definitely eaten something that wasn't human.

The spikes protruding out from the muscles on various parts of its body.

It was not a trait of the Quirae nor that of a human.

Nor was it a trait of the natives of Angkara.

‘It... ate the original owners of the blue armor, huh? They were in there, I see.’

“Keke...kehehehe...”

The 4th-level Quirae screamed at Hansoo as they crawled out from a part of the city that was glowing brightly.

Chapter 364: The buried natives (1)

—boom!—

Hansoo frowned as he stared at the monster furiously attacking him.

‘God damn it.’

Quirae.

Integrating the genes of the things it’s eaten to reinforce its weak points and strengthen its strong points.

They repeated this and strengthened their race as a whole.

Their strength hugely depended on what they ate.

So Hansoo knew—

—that this strength was not something that came from eating humans.

...SSSSSS...

Hansoo frowned as he felt the 4th-level monster threatening to break apart his arm.

It wasn’t much different from before in terms of looks.

The Quirae’s armor-like exoskeleton was still there, and if one ignored the spikes on the back of their bodies, they still looked like armored humans.

The issue was what was inside of it.

If the thing inside the armor was once a human, it was something much more cruel and evil now.

A new race.

‘The original owners of the blue armor... they seem to have been quite strong.’

—boom!—

A force shocked his entire body, and not even his evolved blue armor could handle it, even as it sucked in energy at an insane rate.

They didn't have anything particularly special about them.

But they had focused on their abilities as a 'lifeform'.

Powerful physical strength.

Endless vitality.

Powerful defense and adaptability.

Overflowing mana.

Whatever it had eaten, the Quirae had definitely eaten something with immense physical abilities.

And Hansoo thought of a race.

'This is what I wanted to become.'

Change a weak body to something powerful, providing a tremendous amount of adaptability with the Spirits.

Generate mana with the Mana Jade and a powerful life force from the World Tree.

Gain the weapon <Dragon God Armor> from this zone and continue upwards.

Although the ones in front of his eyes didn't have the Dragon God Armor, it was almost similar because of the Quirae's hard exoskeleton.

Although he had to open the Abyss due to a change in plans, if he hadn't done so then he would've first taken over Nelkipa and then headed towards the moon which stored the Dragon God Armors, the <Karakan>.

'Well, the story's a little different now.'

Lost in thought, Hansoo swung his hammer and smashed down at the head of the 4th-level Quirae.

—boom!—

The Quirae's exoskeleton, which was as hard or even harder than the Dragon God Armor, smashed apart and its inner flesh crushed.

—kiiiing!—

The blue armor went berserk as it started crazily sucking in Hansoo's energy.

And the blue armor condensed all around Hansoo's body and released the stored energy inside it, providing him with powerful strength.

As if it were saying that it couldn't let its precious host die.

—crunch!—

Hansoo's original strength had combined with that of the blue armor's.

And Hansoo used this newfound strength to grab onto the Quirae's mouth that had opened up wide.

—split!—

The mouth that could even crush the city's alloy walls couldn't withstand Hansoo's strength, and he ripped it apart.

But even as it died, the 4th-level monster grasped Hansoo's arms as he ripped apart its mouth.

—crunch!—

Literally overflowing with life force—

—the 4th-level Quirae continued to survive and linger on.

Kyaaaak!

And as if the others couldn't waste the small chance that 4th-level Quirae had created for them, the surrounding 2nd and 3rd-level Quirae screamed as they charged towards him.

Hansoo scoffed at the sight and squeezed out the mana in his

body.

And the Mana Jade made a strange sound similar to a complaint since the blue armor was already draining it.

As if complaining about how this was all too much for it to take.

But apparently, the Mana Jade knew that it was also nothing without its owner, and it seemed to strain itself to squeeze out more mana.

Soon the blue mana turned red.

—boom!—

Hansoo's Pandemic Blade exploded out from his body and surrounded him.

—swoooooosh!—

“Kya... kuhak!”

The 3rd-level Quirae managed to withstand the Pandemic Blade before it started to melt down like snow under a blazing sun.

Hansoo breathed in deeply as he examined this new strength from the Pandemic Blade.

It was growing.

The Immortal Soul was continuously growing from the outside stimulus.

As his Immortal Soul grew, he also became stronger.

And as his overall strength rose, his Pandemic Blade became stronger as well.

Stimulus and battle created powerful beings.

Like a steel-blade tempered with every swing of a hammer, he became stronger every time something blocked his path.

He continued to grow and became stronger.

‘But it’s still... not easy.’

—booom!—

Hansoo smashed away the 4th-level Quirae after covering his hammer with the Nine Dragons Strike and frowned.

Melchizedek wasn't suppressing their growth since it just needed to teleport them away.

And as if they were thankful about it, the Quirae didn't go against Melchizedek and only focused on increasing their forces.

The result of their collaboration was beyond reason.

Despite having crushed countless 4th-level Quirae, they continued to crawl out from the depths.

Unlike the 2nd and 3rd-levels who seemed numb to the deaths of their comrades, the other 4th-levels screamed at seeing the deaths of their own kind and charged at him crazily.

Towards him, who was killing their kind, but could still strengthen himself.

A precious food source.

And Hansoo frowned at this.

‘...I cannot get past them at this rate.’

No, he could buy time.

But at this rate, Melchizedek would activate the Quantum Transmission.

And at this rate, he'd fail to escape this place as well.

He and Kiriell would fail at becoming stronger, and Enbi Arin would die.

‘Kiriell. What are you doing now?’

Because the Quirae had devoured another race, an unknown variable had occurred.

And he needed a new variable as well.

—booom!—

Hansoo smashed away a Quirae charging towards him and looked into the distance.

.....

“The inner area is a bit different from the outskirts. Those things are really vicious... ugh...”

Kiriell, covered in the green liquid, frowned as she heard N-Aroel’s speech.

“So what was your original plan?”

N-Aroel pointed with trembling fingers.

“If you go a bit off from the central area... there’s a control center where you can control Mimir and the Fusion Reactor. Even if you don’t break the Quantum Transmission machine, you can still stop it. Damn! I didn’t mean that we should head towards the center!”

The nine Dragon God Soldiers, including R-Zairon Nell, frowned. But they still didn’t feel good about this.

‘Slightly off from the center...’

According to the current pattern, these things were stronger the closer they got to the center. Moving slightly away from the center wasn’t enough to make them sigh in relief.

Not when they were looking at the corpse of the 4th-level Quirae in front of them.

And their gruesome expressions proved it.

“Haa... Haaaa.”

“Dammit... You’re telling me that these things will swarm us once we go deeper?”

“Ugh... Captain. Can’t we just go around?”

The two 4th-level Quirae.

They'd almost died from just dealing with two.

No, if that woman called Kiriel hadn't helped, then at least one or two of them would've died.

'But she wants to go into the same place these things are swarming?'

The Dragon God Soldiers freaked out.

Even if they'd lost the strength from the Flame, they would have a higher survival rate if they hid in the outskirts.

Dying like this—it would be a worthless death.

And R-Zairon Nell thought so too.

'...Should we escape?'

Charging inside was only possible when they had a chance at winning.

Even if it were the outer areas of the center, the Quirae would rip them apart.

Since countless others would swarm in while they were busy fighting a few.

'Dammit... How can a race like this exist?'

<...Analyzation Impossible.>

<More research required.>

Words continuously appeared on the panel while they scanned this 4th-level monster, but every sentence was full of errors and failures.

The aliens and these insects were annoying enough, but for these things to be on Nelkipa...

'Damn... Right. This whole Nelkipa is suspicious too... We need to take into account the other variables as well.'

R-Zairon Nell made a decision.

To retreat.

“We’ll retreat. There... is no chance of survival at this rate.”

All the other Dragon God Soldiers nodded.

They could only move forward by paying with their lives.

They’d fought for a very long time and knew that reality was colder and harsher beyond reason.

But at that moment—

—a single streak of light ascended into the sky.

It looked like a skill had created it.

And Kiriel sighed in relief as she spoke to the surrounding Dragon God Soldiers and N-Aroel.

“Let’s go inside.”

“...I told you. It’s the end if we go in and get surrounded.”

—crack—

R-Zairon Nell stepped on a corpse by his feet and shook his head.

“I told you, I’m not alone.”

‘I trust in you, Hansoo.’

Kiriel giggled as she looked at the bright and blue light that had risen far up into the sky.

.....

“Phew. I know she’ll understand.”

Hansoo breathed in and out and then looked towards the hole projecting the bright blue light.

Although a metal wall had initially covered it, the 4th-level Quirae had broken past it in a hurry.

Getting to the Quantum Transmission machine in time was impossible.

But Kiriel would do it.

She was a smart child.

He just had one job.

To create a path for them.

Also, he was curious.

‘Let’s see... what could be inside?’

As to why these things were trying to stop him from entering.

—boom!—

Hansoo started to charge towards the giant hole where countless Quirae had formed a blockade, preventing him from advancing further.

Chapter 365: The buried natives (2)

—boom!—

“Damn! Are you sure this is the right way?”

“Ah!...Yes! Yes! Please just protect me!”

R-Zairon Nell frowned as he stared at N-Aroel struggling under his grip.

‘Was he usually this talkative?’

I mean, he understood.

The current situation wasn’t the best one to keep oneself calm.

—boom!—

“Ahh!”

N-Aroel freaked out again as a giant explosion occurred next to R-Zairon.

The insectoids continued to swarm towards them from all directions.

And they couldn’t even see any of the 1st-level insects anymore.

They were all 2nd or 3rd-level, and sometimes one or two 4th-levels came out.

Basically, it was a field of insects.

“Ahhh!”

R-Zairon Nell ignored N-Aroel’s screams, ripping apart a 3rd-level insectoid and looking around.

He killed and killed and killed.

But the numbers did not decrease.

The speed at which the insects were filling up the place was actually faster than the soldiers’ rate of killing.

Monstrous breeding speed and powerful bodies.

“Kuaa...ahhhh!”

—boom!—

R-Zairon Nell gritted his teeth as he watched his subordinates barely killing off a 4th-level insectoid.

‘...We can barely kill one with five of us?’

R-Zairon Nell couldn’t even imagine what would happen if these things fell onto the main planet.

No matter how noisy this N-Aroel was, it was important that they needed to take him to the Quantum Transmission machine.

They could just break it once they reached it, but according to what they’d heard, its location was apparently the main lair for these guys.

It was not someplace where they’d crawl into willingly.

‘...To walk in there by himself. A maniac.’

—boom! boom!—

R-Zairon Nell felt the shockwaves and explosive sounds in the distance and refocused his attention.

He was thankful anyway.

By charging into the insectoid’s nest and attracting most of their attention, that male alien had diverted quite a large number of their forces.

This was the only reason they had been able to push forward.

If it weren’t for that person in the distance, they would’ve long since died.

“Is it not done yet?”

A female’s voice rang out, one that didn’t quite fit the scene.

But nobody could ignore her voice.

—crunch!—

‘What the f***...’

One of the Dragon God Soldiers was at a loss.

She’d single-handedly killed a 4th-level insectoid that the five of them had barely been able to handle.

With just her tiny stature.

They had scoffed when they’d initially talked about these aliens.

Wondering how these barbarians could ever beat their advanced technology.

But seeing her with their own eyes, they realized what the meaning of a ‘monster’ was.

‘And... that girl is suspicious too.’

—boom!—

The Dragon God Soldiers frowned at the woman hanging on the back of that woman called Kiriel.

Although the aura coming from her body was very faint and was right on the verge of disappearing, they could sense it.

That Kiriel and the woman on her back were the same types of creature.

Meaning that as long as she could survive and heal, another monster like Kiriel would be born.

Just like the one massacring the monsters before their eyes.

No, like the one who had drawn the attention of the majority of these insects in the distance.

—smack!—

R-Zairon Nell smashed away a Quirae charging at him and thought to himself: ‘...Those things are too dangerous.’

Although these half-insect, half-humanoid creatures were

monsters, that female who was ripping them apart with only her hands and a small dagger was no less of a monster.

There was never an eternal ally or an opponent on the battlefield. Especially if the target was a barbarian like those things.

‘I should prepare.’

R-Zairon Nell sent a message with his brain waves to N-Aroel.

<Can you hear me? If you can, then move your thumb.> N-Aroel jolted at the sudden voice in his head but then moved his thumb as he felt the pressure of R-Zairon Nell’s hand on his neck.

If he didn’t follow R-Zairon Nell’s words, then his skull could get crushed at any moment.

And with something like the Dragon God Armor, breaking his skull was no harder than crushing apart a block of tofu.

‘Good.’

The moment N-Aroel responded, R-Zairon Nell started to dash and then sent another message.

<You said you could control the Quantum Transmission machine, right? Is it simply turning it on and off, or can you control it in detail? Such as location, target, and area? If you can, then move your second finger. If you can only turn it on and off, move your third finger.> N-Aroel pondered for a bit at the question and then moved his second finger.

‘Mmm...’

And R-Zairon Nell started to ponder when he saw this.

.....

“What’s making you so sad?”

—boom!—

Hansoo mumbled, smashing apart a 4th-level Quirae.

Their attacks had enough force to crack apart his blue armor.

But Hansoo ignored the impact and swung his Mjolnir again.

—boom!—

Covered in the Nine Dragons Strike, the hammer smashed apart the Quirae's head.

The Quirae's body stopped moving and fell to the ground.

—rumble!—

Hansoo frowned as he felt the Immortal Soul healing the damage he'd received from the Quirae's attacks.

'Just a bit... just a bit more.'

This wasn't enough.

His opponents were strong, yes.

Since they were continuously causing damage to his body.

The tide-like swarm of Quirae had been successful at causing damage to his body, but this wasn't enough.

The declining rate of the Immortal Soul's growth proved this.

The same level of stimulus and battle speed.

Unlike a battle that required tension and strength, it was becoming more of a chore.

As if the Immortal Soul was testing whether his stamina would run out or not.

But this wasn't enough.

With only this much stimulus, his stamina would actually run out before the Immortal Soul could successfully evolve.

As a race that ruled over the 3rd floor of the Abyss, the insects' strength was quite substantial.

But that strength was still limited.

‘I should be thankful that they didn’t eat the Abyssal beings when they grew up.’

—boom!—

Hansoo continued to smash them apart and proceeded to his destination.

Kiriel would deal with the transmission.

But that was still just a part of the process as a whole.

This place was a forge.

A place that would temper their strength.

And they had to become stronger.

To solve everything above.

And... there was a solution.

Within the bodies of the ones charging at him, there were still traces of human genes.

If they had devoured both humans and the owners of the blue armor, but still had faint auras of humans lingering within them, then that only meant one thing.

That they hadn’t finished their evolution.

They hadn’t been able to fully erase those traces of humans and thus bring the full potential of the genes from the owners of the blue armor.

Since there was no need to keep behind the human’s genes.

He wasn’t sure before, but now he knew.

The natives of the blue armor was a race that was countless times stronger than humans.

So he knew.

‘They exist.’

If there were this many 4th-level Quirae swarming around, he

was sure that they were inside.

Ones who had been successful in erasing the human genes and brought the genes of the stronger race to the limits.

He didn't know if they were currently evolving or if they just hadn't come out yet, but he was sure that they existed.

And at that moment—

<I was one hell of a guy, but you... you really are something else. Must you go this far?> He could hear the voice of the <Immortal Soul>'s original owner inside the seed in his head.

Unlike the Pandemic Blade's talkative owner, this person had been silently watching him the whole time.

And Hansoo didn't respond to the man's voice.

Since he didn't have a chance to.

—kachak!—

It wasn't because of the countless 3rd-level Quirae around him.

Or the three 4th-level Quirae charging towards him.

Within a short distance of 1km—a mere few steps for a transcendent—there was a bright, blue hole.

Something was crawling out from it.

With a valiant aura and a steady speed.

Unlike the Quirae that were madly charging at him.

That tremendous pressure pushed down onto Hansoo.

“Found you.”

Hansoo mumbled as he looked at the being crawling out of the hole.

A different form than the 4th-level Quirae, who were bulky and covered with thick armor.

Although the Quirae had been the one to eat them, it had

integrated so much with the owners of the blue armor that it looked just like them.

The traits of the owners of the blue armor did not simply affect them internally but had even turned their outer appearance.

Unlike the usual dark red shells, the gem-like blue armor on its body seemed made of beautiful crystals.

And this being, instead of charging at him like the others, simply stared at him while maintaining the tense atmosphere.

But of course, this didn't last long.

—boooooom!—

A strange wave resonated out from Kiriel's direction.

A wave that moved through the entire city.

‘Did she arrive?’

And at that moment—

—boom!—

—as if they were having a final showdown before the arena disappeared, Hansoo and the bright blue creature collided.

Chapter 366: The buried natives (3)

—rumble—

From within the swarm of Quirae.

A small group was struggling.

“Dammit... Even if we want to back out, we might not be able to survive!”

“Shut up and maintain your position! Don’t move until N-Aroel finishes activating it!”

—ssssk!—

R-Zairon Nell shouted at his comrades and then sliced apart a Quirae with his nanoblade.

“Haa...haa...”

—tiktik—

—titititik—

One man ignored the countless Quirae jumping towards him and was pressing various buttons that were appearing in the air.

R-Zairon Nell watched N-Aroel, who was deeply focused on the panel in front of him as if he couldn’t hear the loud noises around them. And he thought to himself: ‘Hmm, I guess he does his job well. Anyway, for such a chance like this to appear within my life...’

Although it was a life-threatening danger, it was also a tremendous opportunity.

Pompeion was pushing their forces back.

If he could smash all these things into Pompeion’s territory?

If he unleashed these things on the countless cities unprepared for something like this?

He didn't even need to think about what would happen.

‘Chaos.’

If everything went according to his plan, they could easily push back the enemy's forces.

And he would gain the merits for this and increase his presence within his clan.

—boom!—

“Hahahaha!”

R-Zairon Nell started to laugh as he smashed away another Quirae.

He felt his mind brighten at the thought of his promising future.

But he quickly regained his senses at the looks of the other Dragon God Soldiers.

‘Right. It's not the time to laugh right now.’

He hadn't succeeded in his plan yet.

Even if he did succeed, it would be an issue.

The biggest variable was themselves.

And the aliens.

It was pointless to use force to deal with them.

They had clearly seen their prowess.

—boom!—

‘Yeah. Too strong.’

R-Zairon Nell thought to himself as he watched Kiriel in the distance. Even as she massacred the Quirae, that girl managed to keep her guard up.

Even if he could succeed in ambushing her from the back, a single mistake could kill off at least half of the nine.

She may look tired, but so were they.

But he had a hidden card up his sleeves.

‘The Quantum Transmission. How can I use it in the most efficient manner?’

R-Zairon Nell continued to think as he looked at Kiriel, who was slashing her dagger from side to side.

.....

—boom!—

The Mjolnir smashed the 5th-level Quirae’s body.

A loud sound occurred as cracks appeared on its crystalline exoskeleton.

But they only existed for a moment.

—ududuck!—

The crystalline structure continuously changed and rebuilt itself as it absorbed and dispersed the force.

It deflected away parts of Mjolnir’s lightning while absorbing other parts to strengthen its exoskeleton further.

Of course, it couldn’t fully negate the shock.

—crack!—

—crackack!—

Although the exoskeleton dispersed the majority of impact, the strike from the combination of five dragons smashed onto the Quirae’s body and pushed it back.

And the sounds of something breaking rang out from beneath the armor.

But it was only pushed back for a bit.

—pushuk!—

It smashed its feet into the ground and received the full shock

with its body.

It then made a fist.

—boooooom!—

The right fist of the Quirae flew and struck at Hansoo's blue armor.

—crunch!—

A strange sound occurred beneath the blue armor, a sound similar to what he'd heard when he attacked the Quirae.

His bones broke, and his muscles exploded.

The blue armor also turned crystalline and absorbed most of the impact, but the residual force still drove deep into his body.

Of course, he didn't get pushed back or anything.

His response was quite similar to that of the Quirae's.

He raised his Demonic Dragon Reinforcement to the limits and protected his important intestines and muscles.

His Immortal Soul connected his broken bones and healed his flesh.

And after gathering all the strength in his body— —booooooom!
—

—he swung the hammer in his hand.

Just like how the Quirae had done.

Their actions were similar, and so was their strength.

Withstanding attacks with their body and then counterattack.

The battle between Hansoo and the evolved Quirae was a dogfight, nothing more.

—booom!—

—boom!—

Dozens of attacks were carried out with every second.

Armors broke, and the flesh beneath crushed.

And countless 4th-level Quirae continued to charge towards them.

—crunch!—

Even as he fought the blue creature in front of him, he didn't forget to kill the others as well.

Hansoo clenched his fist at the tremendous change taking place in the fragment inside his body.

Changes were occurring at a rapid pace.

At least until the moment he died, the damage he was receiving was causing his body to change at a crazy rate.

The Immortal Soul frenziedly fixed and grew in order to keep him alive.

‘Just a bit... just a bit more!’

Hansoo's insides continued to compress and explode as he glared at his opponent in front of him.

His stamina continued to drain, and his body had turned into a mess.

Although the Immortal Soul was working as hard as it could, his current opponent and the swarm of others around him continued to flood towards him.

But thanks to this, his fragments had reached the very limits of their growth.

The Quirae realized this instinctively and attacked him with even more fervor.

To stop him and smash him apart before that change occurred.

The actions of the 5th-level Quirae as it rushed forward, heedless of how much Hansoo smashed its whole body, proved it all.

But Hansoo smiled as he continued to attack it.

—boom!—

The Immortal Soul had grown a lot.

Its current level could no longer compare to its form of just a few moments ago.

And thanks to this, his overall strength had risen.

Even when the Quirae had smashed his body apart, and his bones were creaking, the increased strength of his skills proved it.

“Kuhuk... Ahhh!”

Hansoo, who’d endured its attacks until now with the blue armor, could no longer hold back the pain as he screamed and got pushed back.

The expression of the 5th-level Quirae turned ugly.

It realized instinctively—

—that at this rate, the change would fully occur before the opponent tired out.

—boom!—

“Kaaaa!”

But only the 5th-level Quirae, which had been able to stay sane, could detect this.

As the other Quirae pounced at him with even more fervor— — kiiiiing!—

—changes occurred among the surrounding Quirae.

No, not on the bodies of the Quirae, but rather in the air surrounding them.

Blue particles appeared around the Quirae’s bodies.

A familiar aura.

‘Quantum Transmission!!!’

Hansoo realized what the people who'd gone to control the Quantum Transmission had chosen.

They had decided to throw the Quirae onto the planet, Angkara.

‘This isn’t good.’

—booom!—

Hansoo smashed away a few 4th-level Quirae, frowning as he looked at the smiling face of the 5th-level Quirae.

This was not good at all.

If he'd fought just a bit more, he would be able to move forward.

And only with that strength would he be able to grasp Clementine's underlings, as well as Melchizedek, and smash them all into the ground.

Neither tactics nor technology mattered in the face of absolute strength.

He needed to get to the level of a 3rd-Star to at least handle them.

But if the transmission succeeded now and the ones in front of his eyes disappeared, things would take much, much longer.

It would be hard to find a new hammer to temper him as efficiently as these creatures before him.

But soon—

—he realized that the transmission wasn't only sending the Quirae away.

—kiiiiing!—

Blue particles started to appear around his body as well.

.....

—booom!—

“Just hold on a bit more.”

“Ahhh! This beast!

The Dragon God Soldiers screamed as they fought.

Not the Quirae, but another being.

“These kids... you dare trick me?”

—crack!—

As Kiriel swung her fang, cracks appeared in the air.

The single line that she'd drawn flew forward towards the Dragon God Soldiers, threatening to slice them apart.

‘Ahhhh!’

One of the Dragon God Soldiers freaked out and tried to back away.

Of course.

He witnessed her slice one of his comrades down the center of his body.

Even with the Dragon God Armor, that attack would kill him instantly.

But Kiriel continued slashing with her dagger while receiving attacks from all around.

‘Damn... it!’

But as the Dragon God Soldier was about to scream out loud at the approaching dagger— “Dumbass.”

—boom!—

—R-Zairon Nell charged in from the distance and attacked her from behind.

And Kiriel quickly backed off at seeing him, her teeth clenched with frustration.

She could heal if she got hit, but Enbi Arin could not.

‘You evil bastard.’

—whoosh!—

Kiriel couldn't finish her goal, so she quickly jumped into the air. And as she landed, countless particles lingered around her body. R-Zairon Nell laughed at this scene.

“Hahahaha! Think of it as an honor! You'll be able to face the <Flame> right before your eyes!”

The location that the two—no, three, including the one on her back—aliens would be going to was the planet Angkara.

To the center of the <Flame> deep within the planet.

Even they wouldn't be able to survive if such a force were to sweep through them.

No matter how strong they were.

The insectoids would go to Pompeion.

The aliens to the heart of the <Flame>.

And they, the Dragon God Soldiers, back to their headquarters.

The Quantum Transmission continued running.

Kiriel frowned at this.

‘...Not good.’

There were seven left.

But it would be impossible for her to get through them in a short time while also protecting Enbi from harm.

The Quantum Transmission was continuously analyzing her atoms in order to send her away.

It was taking a long time simply because there were too many entities, but sooner or later it would send her off.

Kiriel breathed in and said:

“...You bastard. Just wait.”

“Hahaha! Are you going to survive from the Flame? How

delusional!”

R-Zairon Nell laughed at her.

It was only called a Flame in name, but in truth, it was like a small sun.

The internal sun that provided a tremendous amount of energy and strength to the creatures of Ankara.

There were no other plot twists.

They would die, and he would become a hero.

As R-Zairon Nell laughed—

—whooooosh!—

—something was flying towards them at a rapid pace.

Tiny, but extremely fast.

“...Huh?”

‘Is that dangerous?’

It was moving way too fast to figure out its identity.

A mysterious object that was cutting through the air like a meteor.

But even before they could fully react—

—Kiriel jumped into the air and caught the object that almost flew past her.

“...Huh?”

As the Dragon God Soldiers looked at her in confusion—
‘Hansoo...’

—a smile soon replaced the gloomy expression on her face.

“Never mind. Let’s not wait—I’ll deal with you now.”

Kiriel smiled as she looked at the violet crystal in her hand— she could feel a condensed energy that was countless times denser than

the ones she'd acquired.

Chapter 367: The buried natives (4)

“Dammit! ...Block her!”

R-Zairon Nell screamed, freaking out.

They became stronger when they ate crystals.

They didn't know how much stronger she'd become after eating that.

But the Dragon God Soldiers all hesitated.

‘Damned bastards...’

R-Zairon Nell gritted his teeth.

He knew what they were thinking.

There wasn't much time left until the transmission was complete.

They could win by just standing their ground—there was no point fighting her if they didn't need to.

It would be a great loss if they got hurt after charging in recklessly.

‘And... just how much stronger can she become anyway?’

—thought one of the Dragon God Soldiers.

They knew that those aliens grew stronger when they ate the crystals.

N-Aroel had told them, and they had seen it.

If Kiriel hadn't continued to eat the crystals and gotten stronger, they wouldn't have been able to get to this point either.

So they didn't feel the need to attack.

Even if she ate that crystal, they could easily hold their ground.

And as they held their formation—

—Kiriell smiled and absorbed the crystal.

...SSSS...

—rumble—

Something deep inside her twisted around and started to rise.

Unlike the minute changes up until now, this was on a grander scale.

—crackle—

Walls broke down around her as lightning exploded and the space shook.

Just from a simple change.

Of course, if there were this much change outside the body, the insides wouldn't stay the same either.

'Ahhh... This is it!'

Kiriell felt the overflowing strength in her body.

—kuduk—

—crackle—

Bones rearranged, and her body changed.

Becoming a body that was more fitting to someone who'd crossed over another wall.

She had only felt something like this twice in her life.

First, when she had transcended beyond human limits.

And second, when she had become a 2-Star Transcendent.

A sensation that felt better than anything a human could ever hope to experience.

A feeling that one would pay any price to sense again.

'Maybe this is why everyone tries so hard to gain more strength.'

—whoosh—

—thought Kiriel to herself as the energy within her calmed down.

It was possible that people were chasing after this brief moment rather than the actual strength itself.

Of course, the strength was good too.

—crackle—

‘Good.’

Kiriel clenched her fist, looked at the Dragon God Soldiers looking at her in fear in the distance, and then poured all her remaining crystals into Enbi Arin.

—whooosh!—

Despite being unconscious, the damaged body madly absorbed the crystals.

And as Enbi Arin grew stronger from absorbing the crystals, her body slowly regenerated.

‘It’s not a complete recovery since she didn’t cross the wall, but...’

This was good enough.

She just needed Enbi to hold on until she wrapped things up in this place.

Kiriel looked at the people in front of her with a calm expression.

The whole process had taken just an instant.

The Dragon God Soldiers then realized that the change that had happened within Kiriel’s body wasn’t natural, and they backed off.

‘Heh. Right, they wouldn’t want to fight since there’s just a little bit of time until it’s all over.’

Kiriel looked at the blue particles surrounding her and their bodies.

The flower-like, blue droplets were continuously swirling and pulsing as if ready to send them away at a moment's notice.

One minute. No, just thirty seconds. They just needed to hold on for thirty seconds—there was no reason for them to risk their lives.

‘Thirty seconds. Good enough.’

In the next instant—

—swoosh!—

—Kiriél's fang cut across the air again.

The same weapon and the same motion as before.

“Damn!”

The Dragon God Soldiers unconsciously fell into defensive positions to protect themselves.

It was the same attack as before, but it made them feel extremely uneasy.

If they could hold on for just a bit longer, it would safely teleport them away.

The Dragon God Soldiers prepared for impact.

But only for a moment.

“...?”

The Dragon God Soldiers made confused expressions.

The attack that threatened to slice them apart hadn't done anything.

‘What the hell is this, crazy b****?’

R-Zairon Nell, who had also flinched and gotten into a defensive position like the others, made a confused expression as well.

But he soon shook his head—it was all over.

As long as they returned to the fleet, they wouldn't see her face anymore.

No, they just need to fire at her from the fleet and end her.

If the Quantum Transmission successfully activated, there wouldn't be enough energy for the Mimir to activate anyway.

But their expressions soon turned into one of panic.

“Wha...what the hell!”

The blue particles.

The blue flowers that had been blooming around their bodies were dispersing.

The blue droplets disappeared like popped bubbles.

Meaning that the Quantum Transmission had stopped.

“No! Dammit! N-Aroel! What's going—!”

At the sudden turn of events, R-Zairon Nell and everyone else spun around.

They'd thought that N-Aroel had caused this.

But R-Zairon Nell realized that it wasn't N-Aroel's fault after turning around.

—crackle—

—ssss—

She had sliced apart the Quantum Transmission machine.

The giant tower-like machine had been cut diagonally down the middle, causing the upper segment to slide down.

And R-Zairon Nell realized what she'd cut.

“Damn...”

The faint trace of hope within his mind disappeared with the machine's destruction.

As R-Zairon Nell stared at the giant machine in a daze, Kiriel spoke out: “I told you, right?”

All the Dragon God Soldiers fell into despair at this voice.

And Kiriel shrugged her shoulders.

“Well... I never said I was going to kill you. After all, we fought together before.”

The expressions of the Dragon God Soldiers brightened up at these words.

And it was the same for R-Zairon Nell.

Seeing a ray of hope, R-Zairon Nell quickly changed his expression and spoke to Kiriel: “Sorry about that before. Please... If you let us go, just this once... the Kalkuroun will never mistreat you..”

Words that were full of shame, but that didn't matter.

Since there was nothing more important than one's life.

Even if he had to lick her toes, he had to survive.

Kiriel chuckled as she said:

“Sure. Let's just go our separate ways.”

“...Where are you going? You aren't going with us?’

Kiriel smirked at R-Zairon Nell's words.

“Well, I have a comrade. Good luck.”

“Wha... NOO!”

If Kiriel disappeared like this, then it was over for them.

R-Zairon Nell freaked out and screamed, but it was of no use.

Since Kiriel had already disappeared.

—boooooom!—

Even before R-Zairon Nell's screams reached the place she'd been standing on, she had already left.

“Keke...”

“Kaa...”

The Quirae, who had flinched at the sudden appearance of the blue particles, started slowly moving towards them again.

Towards the Dragon God Soldiers who were already exhausted from internal struggles and no longer had an escape path.

“...Damn.’

It would’ve been better to die at Kiriel’s hands.

The Dragon God Soldier’s expressions were filled with despair and fear as the swarms of Quirae, covering the whole horizon in their entirety, charged towards them.

.....

—boom!—

Hansoo smiled as he looked at the blue particles disappearing while he smashed a Quirae away.

‘She succeeded.’

The Quantum Transmission had stopped.

Everything had returned to plan.

He just needed to defeat his opponent and move up.

The Mjolnir swung even more powerfully as if it had read Hansoo’s thoughts.

At that moment—

—crack!—

—a sound of something breaking rang out from inside him.

<Good job. I don’t know what you’ll do with this strength, but... I really do wish you won’t have to use it.>

The consciousness of the seed, which had stayed silent for most of the time it had been inside his body, spoke to him with worry.

Its power was an immortal’s rate of recovery.

Meaning that if he needed its strength, then his life was possibly in danger, and his body crushed apart.

A strength that was better the less one used it.

But Hansoo couldn't respond to it anyway.

Since he had fallen into silence.

And as if the Quirae had sensed the changes inside his body, they charged forward to rip him apart.

But they couldn't stop the change anymore.

Something similar to what had happened to Kiriel just now, but more natural, started to rush through his insides.

If Kiriel's change was that of forcefully hacking apart something forbidden, Hansoo's change was the exact opposite.

He knew what he needed—he excavated it from the seed and proceeded to the next step.

Hansoo's destroyed body then started to recover at an insane rate.

The Quirae charged at him like countless moths to a flame, and Hansoo smashed them apart as he got accustomed to his changing body.

And then—

—boooooooooom!—

—the sound of something exploding reverberated from inside his body.

.....

“...What a crazy world. What the hell is going on down there?”

R-Koronaita Nell frowned as he watched the scenes happening below, and then turned around.

There was a target which he could ask in more detail.

“So... you managed to survive on your own? The other Dragon God Soldiers all died?”

“Yes, only me.”

“Just you... Hmm...”

The man who had been acting alongside the Dragon God Soldiers below.

N-Aroel smiled at R-Koronaita Nell.

Chapter 368: The buried natives (5)

I am saddened.

At how strong we are.

And yet, we cannot avoid our annihilation.

Where are the saviors who left to save us?

.....

“Huh... It ended already?”

Kiriell mumbled after she'd reached the place where Hansoo had been, looking at the scene before her eyes.

—rumble—

The red clouds that had seeped out from Hansoo's body were literally melting down the entire area.

Starting from the Quirae and even affecting the metal walls of the city.

The germs duplicated over and over again and were devouring everything as far as the eye could see.

—rumble—

The 4th-level Quirae that Hansoo personally had to smash apart with his hammer were also melting down as well.

His strength was unlike anything it had been before.

“Kyah...Kuhuk!”

Kiriell gulped at the scene; the Quirae were screaming as they melted down.

‘...Where did he obtain something like this?’

She knew that she was quite strong.

And her skills were quite powerful as well.

When one transcended, their skill limits would rise significantly, allowing the transcendent to use them in many more versatile ways than before.

Like being able to tune a machine in whatever way you wanted.

Which meant that the abilities of the user were more important than the skill itself.

‘Or so I thought, but... this is on a different level.’

As if to prove that skills had their own differences, the red cloud was creating a sea of blood.

Kiriel whistled at this but soon smiled.

‘Right, he should at least be this strong.’

If not, there was no point in him going up ahead, right?

This was merely one of the many rewards that Hansoo deserved.

—rumble—

While Kiriel thought about various things, the vast field of red clouds started to shrink back as if they had finished their meal.

—whooosh!—

The storm of clouds rapidly sucked back into Hansoo’s body, and Kiriel found something to her surprise.

‘...There’s still something alive?’

Although most of its body had melted down already, it still maintained its shape, unlike the other Quirae that had completely melted down.

Kiriel quickly moved towards Hansoo as she stared at the bright blue creature.

—tatatak—

She looked at the bright blue creature with curiosity but soon lost interest.

‘It’s already dead.’

Although it had maintained its basic form, that was apparently the limit—the grotesque creature in front of her had long been dead.

At that moment, she heard Hansoo’s voice.

“Good job.”

“It’s nothing. It seems that life is a lot more thrilling staying alongside you.”

Hansoo smiled at her joking words.

Her energetic atmosphere was good to see.

He then looked at Enbi Arin, who seemed to have more vigor on her face, and he sighed in relief.

‘You’ve held on well.’

There was a sea of crystals around her now.

If they picked all of them up and fed them to Enbi Arin, she would easily rise up to a 3-Star and heal.

A very clean result.

But there were a few things they needed to deal with.

First, the Kalkuroun Fleet above them.

Although the fleet couldn’t do anything at this exact moment because of the Mimir, they would fire down strikes the moment they could.

And second.

‘...The thing providing Mimir with the energy.’

Hansoo looked into the abyss where a blue light was seeping out in the distance.

They had been able to transfer one Dragon God Soldier after combining the energy output from all three Fusion Reactors inside

the Main Research Center.

Of course, the combined output had lasted a short moment, but this proved something.

That even a small-scale Quantum Transmission required enough energy to run three cities.

But surprisingly, something unbelievable had occurred in Aokan.

The Quantum Transmission had almost transferred hundreds of thousands of entities.

Through almost a million kilometers of space.

It was not something Aokan's Fusion Reactor could handle.

He could clearly see the countless tubes transferring energy into the depths of the abyss.

‘Hmm. What to do?’

Hansoo pondered for a moment and then spoke to Kiriel.

“Is it possible to read the memory of this thing?”

He pointed at the dead 5th-level Quirae's corpse.

Kiriel quickly nodded and activated her ability on the corpse.

—oooooong—

Her Psychometry, which had further enhanced after breaching another wall, quickly began to read through the memories.

But despite her enhanced ability, Kiriel's expression didn't look very encouraging.

Kiriel shook her head as she said:

“There isn't much.”

It seemed that she couldn't read the memories of the entity that the Quirae had eaten—she could only read the Quirae's memories from its birth.

Just how it had been born in the abyss and had come down here

through the abyss.

Of course, she didn't return empty-handed.

"I've at least found out where the thing this Quirae ate had come from."

"Where?"

Kiriel pointed towards the bright blue abyss in the distance.

And Hansoo tightly grasped the hammer in his hand.

'I guess I must go down.'

He didn't know what he'd find below.

Even though the Quirae had eaten it, its original strength would not be weak.

But Kiriel shook her head as she looked at Hansoo.

"You won't have to fight."

"...?"

Kiriel shrugged her shoulders at Hansoo's confused expression.

"The things those Quirae ate weren't alive."

Corpse after corpse after corpse.

None of them had been alive.

They were all dead and dried up.

"...I don't know what happened."

Kiriel mumbled as she thought back to the memories of that Quirae, and of the area below those depths.

.....

—whoooosh!—

Hansoo thought back to Kiriel's last words as he dropped into the depths.

<Well... There's nothing I'm curious about, so you can go check it

out. I'll be here collecting crystals and restoring Enbi Arin's health.> She just had to collect the crystals on the ground, so it wasn't hard to do.

Hansoo accepted Kiriel's suggestion.

Looking at the surrounding walls, it seemed that something had dug through these depths.

As he fell, he thought:

'...This isn't natural.'

An artificial hole.

And it was clear who had done this.

'Melchizedek.'

Although Nelkipa boasted a powerful defense, as long as it wasn't a life-threatening attack there was no resistance.

It wouldn't care much about a small hole in its skin.

Although it got harder to dig through as one went deeper, digging something like this was a piece of cake for Melchizedek.

—whooosh!—

Falling through the bright blue hole, Hansoo started to control his speed when he saw the ground quickly approaching him from beneath.

—kakakakaka!—

Hansoo held onto a tube along the walls, causing him to quickly slow down, and then proceeded to land.

As he looked up, a blinding blue light surrounded him.

It was a level of brightness that could easily blind a normal human being.

But of course, it wasn't enough to disrupt Hansoo's sight.

—squirm—

His pupils altered as they quickly readjusted to the light level before his eyes.

Hansoo quickly looked around, and then found the source of the light.

—ooooooooong—

A 200-meter radius or so—a very tiny space.

The floor of this space was made up of a transparent material.

And past the transparent floor, a blue sphere pulsed as if it could explode at any moment.

No, it was more like a blue sun.

The giant sphere was so huge that he could clearly see its details despite the distance between them.

It seemed to be right in the center of Nelkipa's body.

The transparent floor absorbed the energy radiating out from the sphere and was sending it over to a crystal located in the center.

And the tubes above him were connected to that crystal.

‘...Amazing.’

Although the crystal wasn't directly connected to the sphere and was only absorbing the energy indirectly, it was more than enough to transfer out all the entities within Aokan.

—tonk—tonk—

Hansoo tapped the floor and then frowned.

‘Unbreakable.’

Maybe he might have been able to if he used all his strength, but the thickness and sturdiness behind it weren't so simple.

And he didn't feel like he should break it anyway.

The small floor beneath his feet was only a small part of a huge glass structure.

Melchizedek probably hadn't broken it because it knew this as well.

'If it were possible, Melchizedek would've done it a long time ago.'

If it had been able to directly harness the energy below the glass floor and control it, there was no reason for it to fly all the way to Angkara.

Angkara would've easily turned into a sea of flames if it just fired a strike using this energy.

But this was well beyond what Melchizedek could control.

Hansoo then turned away from the transparent glass sphere surrounding the miniature blue sun and looked around.

And realized what Kiriel had been talking about.

'...They're all dead.'

Corpses that had been chewed apart by the Quirae's larvae.

But it would have been painful.

These corpses didn't seem like they had died from the Quirae.

It seemed like they'd been dead for a very long time.

And he could see dried-up, yet familiar, sets of armor surrounding the corpses.

Hundreds.

'The blue armor...'

Hansoo was shocked as he looked at the hundreds of blue armor that had dried up from the lack of an energy supply.

Melchizedek had picked one up—that was fine.

But then why wasn't his armor all dried up like those things and was still maintaining its functionality?

At that moment—

—boooooom!—

—a loud sound occurred above the hole he'd fallen down from.

A sound that he could hear despite being multiple kilometers underground.

‘What the hell is going on now?’

Hansoo looked up.

*Ekdud's Notes: The first few lines of this chapter are the original owners of the blue armor. The buried natives. In case anybody was confused

Chapter 369: The buried natives (6)

—boom!—

Hansoo quickly climbed up as he listened to the sounds of explosions.

He could check out that strange space below later anyway.

It was more important to figure out the reason behind the commotion.

—tatata!—

And Hansoo frowned after looking at the scene above ground.

—boooooom!—

—rumble!—

‘Enbi?... Why?’

Hansoo was confused as he stared at Enbi Arin—she had woken up but was currently fighting Kiriel.

.....

—boom!—

‘Ugh!’

Kiriel clenched her teeth as she stared at Enbi Arin, who had started attacking her the moment she woke up.

‘Strong.’

They had both recently risen up to a 3-Star, so their strength levels were similar.

Which meant that the only thing they could compete with was the micromanagement and control of their skills, as well as their level of mastery of those skills.

Of course, Kiriel had always been confident in this field.

As she climbed up, there had been countless others stronger than

her, but she had never lost a fight against an opponent with the same level of strength.

Her natural talent and her Psychometry, which quickly absorbed experiences, allowed her to boast a whole other level of strength.

But she soon realized that she'd been a bit too proud up until this point.

—crack!—

Enbi Arin's enhanced strength and dexterity from her trait, Tainted Emotions, was pushing Kiriel back.

After becoming a 3-Star Transcendent, Enbi Arin's restored and enhanced body raged on as she continuously charged at Kiriel to shred her heart apart.

And the moment she saw this, Kiriel knew.

As to what emotion was fueling Enbi Arin.

‘...Rage.’

Rage was storming through Enbi Arin's body.

To destroy everything before her eyes.

Kiriel quickly shouted in surprise:

“Dammit! I know you can hear me! I'm Hansoo's comrade! We're the ones that woke you up!”

She was different from when the armor had controlled her.

Enbi Arin had no sanity back then.

But now, she was completely sane and only filled with rage.

Which meant that Kiriel could communicate with her.

“...”

Enbi Arin flinched at Hansoo's name, but only for a moment.

“F***...OFF!”

—boom!—

Enbi Arin started to push Kiriell back again.

‘Dammit... At this rate...’

Enbi Arin was strong, but Kiriell had the Dragon God Armor.

But as Kiriell was about to activate her armor— “I’ll take care of it.’

—boom!—

—Hansoo jumped between Enbi Arin and Kiriell, and shouted: “Enbi Arin! Wake up! It’s alright now! It’s all over!”

And Kiriell quickly rejoiced when she saw this.

‘Good. She should stop since Hansoo’s here.’

Although Enbi Arin might not believe her, she should stop once she saw Hansoo.

Although his face and body had altered slightly, he was still recognizable.

And Enbi Arin stopped fighting and looked at Hansoo’s face.

As if she doubted her own vision.

“Kang... Hansoo?”

Hansoo nodded.

“Yes. I’m here.”

But then—

—boom!—

—an even more vicious aura exploded out from Enbi Arin’s body.

Pure, unadulterated rage.

Enbi Arin charged at Hansoo and roared at him.

“You! This is all your fault! This! I was living just fine!”

“...?”

‘Something’s weird.’

Hansoo pondered as he blocked Enbi Arin's attacks.

The chipset wasn't controlling her.

And she was completely sane.

But something was strange.

Hansoo looked at Enbi Arin's shaking eyes and continued to think of a reason.

.....

—boooboboboom—

The Mimir's fog covered Aokan, so nothing was visible, but the sounds of battle still resonated from within.

And the fleet continued to observe the city.

Although they couldn't see anything, they could guess as to where the sounds originated from.

'What a barbaric race. They fight and fight and fight... What the hell is going on?'

N-Akuon, the leader of the Technorats on the Kalkuroun Fleet, made a bitter expression as he saw the person walking towards him from a distance.

"Uhh... you survived."

'To see him again, especially in this place.'

N-Aroel.

His old rival.

N-Aroel's abilities were no less than his own, but due to his nasty personality and his lack of respect for the R-Levels above him, he'd brought on a lot of hate from the ones at the top.

Especially since he hated wars after being born on a warring planet.

Because of this, he had been exiled to Aokan to rot for eternity,

but for him to return like this...

‘But still... to survive from that chaos.’

N-Aroel smiled as he approached N-Akuon and sat next to him.

“Well, it wasn’t so bad. There’s a lot I learned as well.”

“...Nothing else? At least you came back in one piece.”

N-Akuon spoke to N-Aroel with concern.

Although N-Aroel’s thought processes were a bit dangerous, he wasn’t that bad of a person.

Plus, N-Akuon only labeled him as a rival; there was no real hatred between them.

He only felt lonely after hearing that they’d sent N-Aroel to Aokan, but seeing him like this wasn’t half bad.

N-Aroel smiled at N-Akuon’s words and replied: “There were plenty of things. Fun stuff as well.”

“...Fun?”

N-Akuon asked curiously.

The term ‘fun’ was a word that could pique anybody’s interest.

And N-Aroel chuckled as he nodded.

“Yeah. Fun.”

“What was so fun about it?”

N-Aroel placed his head on his hand, thinking it over.

“There’s a lot. Too many to count, really. But three big ones. Let’s see...”

N-Aroel flicked his finger after a brief pause.

“Alright. This should be first. The conversation I had with Melchizedek.”

N-Akuon frowned and asked:

“Melchizedek?”

“Why are you so shocked? My position was more than enough to talk with Melchizedek.”

N-Akuon quickly started losing interest.

‘...It seems that this was before the rebellion.’

If that was the case, then having a simple conversation wasn’t hard.

Aokan was under Melchizedek’s control, and N-Aroel had been the city’s head technician.

They’d probably talked like two neighbors meeting on their way to work.

“Alright. What did you guys talk about?”

He’d long lost interest, but decided to hear him out.

N-Aroel continued to smile at N-Akuon’s detached tone.

“Well... it’s not much. It was saying something like how Angkara shouldn’t continue like this? About how everything is wrong and they shouldn’t be fighting like this.’

“...?!”

N-Akuon’s eyes widened at N-Aroel’s words.

What was this?

This meant that N-Aroel had long known about Melchizedek’s rebellion.

“...I think we need to discuss this seriously. What do you mean?”

N-Aroel chuckled at N-Akuon’s tense stance.

“It seems that you’re finally interested again. Right, it’s important to stay focused when listening to a fun story like this.”

“...If you’re just fooling around, then drop it. This is not a topic we can fool around with.”

Considering the things Melchizedek had done, even if one was barely involved they would still be framed as a traitor.

This was not a topic one could take lightly.

N-Aroel ignored N-Akuon's words and continued to speak.
“Just listen. Aren't you curious about what Melchizedek said?”

“...Sure. Fine. Speak.”

N-Akuon gave in to his curiosity.

While consoling himself.

‘Yeah. It's a bit too much to call the guards for a light conversation like this.’

If N-Aroel got caught amidst this situation because he called the guards, they might drag him off and torture him.

And N-Akuon didn't feel comfortable about doing such a thing to his old friend.

N-Aroel smiled.

“You... Just like the past, you always cared about me. Thanks. Anyway... what Melchizedek talked about was simple. That we needed to stop the small-scale battles and unite once again.”

“...Why?”

N-Aroel smile turned cold.

“We found traces of another race beneath Aokan.”

A very powerful race.

A race that was countless times stronger than their own planet, both in terms of strength and technology, and had once roamed over the universe.

According to Melchizedek's calculations, they were not something that Ankara could oppose with their divided strength.

After some calculations, Melchizedek had come to the conclusion

of 37 years.

If they stopped their war and focused entirely on development for 37 years, only then would they be able to survive.

N-Akuon scoffed at N-Aroel's words.

“What a crazy can. So what, it's going to conquer Angkara?”

Melchizedek's words were something every civilian in Angkara wanted.

But if it could happen just because they wanted it to, they wouldn't have gone to war in the first place.

There was only one scenario where there were no more disputes between the people.

When everybody was dead.

“Why didn't you tell it to kill everyone off and replace them with machines? Nothing would fight each other anymore.”

If it replaced everything with machines, it could create that united world it talked about.

But N-Aroel shook his head.

“Melchizedek told me that it thought about that as well... But soon told me no. That they would only be able to wield the M-waves properly if people still lived.”

They needed strength to win battles.

And Melchizedek had tried very hard to achieve that strength with only machines.

But it was all futile.

The strength of the <Flame> inside Angkara that powered the Dragon God Armor and the various fleets.

And the hidden ability of humans that allowed them to control that flame's power, the M-waves.

The strength that the Dragon God Soldiers or fleet masters could

use was not something machines could achieve.

So they needed humans.

N-Aroel smiled and looked at N-Akuon.

“In the end, it told me that it found the perfect solution.’

N-Akuon scoffed.

“Chipsets? Brainwashing? It can control our bodies like that, but not our minds.”

The M-waves naturally declined anything that would harm one’s body.

Even if they were brainwashed.

Even if their bodies were forcefully controlled.

The M-waves would resist it all.

N-Aroel scoffed.

“Didn’t I say? It found a solution.”

“...What?”

“It told me it got a hint from someone else. Apparently, in another world... there are people that are asleep inside delightful dreams.”

They slept and dreamed of their ideal world.

And their bodies would fall under Melchizedek’s hands.

There was no resistance, either.

Although the bodies were fighting, their true selves would be in a very happy place.

‘Even if they release the chipset’s controls...They won’t be able to wake up from that dream.’

N-Aroel chuckled.

.....

“...It seems you had a very delightful dream.”

‘The reason why you didn’t want to wake up wasn’t because you didn’t like reality, but because the dream was too good...’

But one couldn’t live inside a dream forever.

They had to wake up.

No matter how happy the dreams made them.

Hansoo looked at Enbi Arin with a heavy expression.

Chapter 370: The buried natives (7)

After Hansoo left.

She had continued to climb up.

To rescue the others that Melchizedek had dragged away to use as test subjects.

To resist Clementine's underlings.

She lamented from time to time.

Why did Hansoo leave them with only a ray of hope and disappear?

Why did he leave behind such a heavy load on their shoulders, never to appear?

But after countless battles.

They had succeeded.

They had defeated their enemies, destroyed Clementine and brought peace to the seven zones.

Everyone had a smile on their face; they destroyed all the Abyssal beings that periodically came down through the elevators.

She had even married, given birth to a child, and was living a happy life.

But this peace had only lasted for a moment.

A new enemy had appeared.

Kang Hansoo.

The one who appeared to lead them into war again, even after they were done with all that.

These were his words:

<Do you think I saved you all for no purpose? It was to use you in the war. Stop being lazy and fight. Stand up and pick up your

weapons.> The world had once again turned into a sea of flames.

All because of him.

Everything they had built up for the past few decades had crumbled.

.....

“Kang Hansoo! How dare you! You gave us up first! What right do you have!? Why do you want us to fight?!”

—boooooom!—

Enbi Arin roared in rage as she swung her fists.

‘Dammit!’

She could only see ruins around her.

The city they had built, the civilization they had created.

It was all in ruins.

All because of him.

‘He... seems a bit different?’

The strangeness of her surroundings and Hansoo’s looks confused her for a bit, but she soon shook her head.

She was sure that this was because of some mental shock.

The past few decades had been too real and happy to be fake...

It could not be fake.

‘If only you didn’t exist!’

—boom!—

Enbi Arin swung her fist again.

But it was futile.

“Argh!”

Two hands grasped both of her arms as they held her down.

“Let me go, you bastard!”

He’d only sealed her hands.

She could still fight.

Enbi Arin lifted her foot and kicked him in the chest.

—boom!—

A loud sound resonated as the surrounding ground shook.

But Hansoo and his blue armor didn’t even budge a single bit.

She had made a few cracks, but it was only for a moment.

The armor quickly mended itself and returned to how it had been before the impact.

‘Dammit...’

As Enbi Arin clenched her teeth at this sight, Hansoo spoke with a heavy tone: “Look. Look around you.”

“What? You bastard... You destroyed everything, what do you want me to look a—!”

Kiriel shook her head and prepared to jump in to help Hansoo.

It didn’t look like they could solve this with words.

Whether it was knocking her out or suppressing her entirely, they had to calm her down first.

But Hansoo merely shook his head at Kiriel.

“...?”

As Kiriel stopped—

—grab!—

—Hansoo’s hands moved from Enbi Arin’s arms to her head.

“Ugh...”

The two hands started to forcibly move her head.

“Look closely. Look where this is.”

“Argh...”

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

Enbi Arin resisted with all her strength, but she couldn't move her hands from her head, and only continued to turn her head to the side.

And Enbi Arin could do nothing else but look around her.

The surrounding scenery that she hadn't looked at in detail because of her focus on Hansoo.

At this moment, Enbi Arin realized.

‘...It's different.’

It was different.

Something was different.

There were ruins, but it was different.

These were not ruins created by their civilization.

They had not made this.

But it was familiar.

‘Where have I seen this...?’

She thought hard to bring back her memories.

And soon—

—flinch—

—Enbi Arin realized where she'd seen this.

The hardest battle of all.

The place that used captured humans as fodder for the Quirae.

The place that had trapped her.

The bloodiest battle they experienced.

Aokan.

If the melted-down walls were restored and covered in steel again, it would be just like back then.

‘Wait... No way... I smashed this apart over a dozen years ago?’

Yes, she had.

In the battle fifteen years ago, she had broken past countless walls in this place to rescue the humans trapped within.

And they had used this momentum to deal with Melchizedek and Clementine.

This was also where she had met her husband.

The man who was nothing but happiness to her.

He was like her lucky charm, everything past this battle had been easy.

There were no obstacles anymore, and her comrades continued to rise in number.

This was the turning point.

The turning point in her life from all the hard and painful battles to pure bliss.

Why was this before her eyes?

She should be at the peak of the seven zones.

Not this place of the past.

!!

“Ugh...”

A sharp pain shot through her head.

...boom! boom...

And soon, she stopped struggling.

Hansoo spoke with a cold tone.

“It was all a dream. Everything you experienced.”

“A... dream?”

Hansoo looked at the ugly expression on Enbi Arin and shouted: “Yes! A long dream. I don’t know where your dream started and ended, but... What you’re seeing now is the reality. Wake up, Enbi Arin!”

And as she heard these words, something started to twist in her head.

The sudden reality caused her to doubt her own memories—that there was something not quite right.

And Hansoo continued to speak.

“If your memory was that of happiness and of things being easy then... that was all a lie. This world... this world is not that kind. This is the reality.”

Then—

—clang!—

—Enbi Arin realized what the strange feeling in her head was.

‘Right... It was too easy.’

His words were correct.

Things had been way too easy.

Too easy for a world where their enemies were powerful beyond reason, and God disliked their happiness.

And as she realized this—

“Ahhh... AHHHHHHHHH!”

—Enbi Arin roared out in rage again.

.....

‘Maybe... maybe it was better to stay asleep.’

Enbi Arin, who sat down after regaining her composure, sighed

deeply.

Reality really was harsh.

‘This... We’re only here?’

Enbi Arin thought as she looked at the ruins around her.

The Indigo and Violet Zones that she’d triumphed over was only a figment of her imagination.

Places created from her fear and then set at a level which she could endure and beat.

‘So I struggled for fifteen years just for this...’

Enbi Arin, who had a blank look on her face, suddenly clenched her teeth and stood up.

She didn’t want to have these weak thoughts.

She had long lost her anger due to her previous bout with Hansoo as well as the fit of rage when realizing the truth.

At this moment, she heard a voice.

“You really adjusted quickly.”

Staring at Kiriell’s eyes, Enbi Arin spoke bitterly: “If I’ve woken up already, then it’s better to forget.”

‘Especially if it was a nightmare.’

She had thought it was a good dream.

But realizing that something like that couldn’t happen in reality, it only changed it to a nightmare.

‘Was she called Kiriell?’

Enbi Arin resumed looking around at the ruins and asked: “You’re going to keep climbing up?”

Hansoo nodded.

There was still the final doorstep.

“Will you come with us?”

Enbi Arin spat out bitterly.

“I’ve... I’ve rested for too long. I must go. I need to repay this debt as well.”

She could not let those who had played around with her just roam around freely.

She could part with Hansoo after that if she really felt like it.

‘Thank you for allowing me to rest properly. In return... I’ll allow you to rest for all eternity.’

Enbi Arin spoke to Hansoo.

“If you’re going to go up, then I’ll guide you from here.”

Confused, Kiriel asked:

“Do you know this place well?”

“Of course. I fought with them for a long time.”

Cutting away the fifteen years and focusing on her memories of Aokan, she started to remember everything in detail.

The ones who she’d fought against.

It had been fifteen years in her dreams, but only a moment in reality.

Her information should be helpful.

Hansoo nodded and stood up.

“Let’s confirm one thing before we go up.”

“Confirm?”

Hansoo chuckled.

“Yeah. When I was about to open a treasure chest, ‘somebody’ caused a damn scene.”

“...You bastard.”

Kiriel giggled at Enbi Arin and then asked Hansoo: “You’re talking about that place below, right?”

Hansoo nodded as he looked towards the bright blue hole in the distance.

.....

“The sounds have stopped. It seems that their fight has ended.”

N-Akuon, who had been listening to N-Aroel, mumbled as he looked at the now silent Aoken.

It looked like the matters below had been wrapped up.

But N-Akuon quickly shook his head and focused on N-Aroel.

Aokan was something the fleet would handle.

For a researcher like him, this was much more interesting.

‘...That can was more insane than we imagined.’

N-Akuon thought of Melchizedek and asked N-Aroel: “So, is that it? Where’s the fun part?”

N-Aroel shook his head.

“Hmm. The second story is... the race I told you about before.”

N-Aroel pointed towards Aokan below and spoke.

Chapter 371: Inheritance War (1)

“Woah...”

After coming down, Kiriell regretted her previous decision not to follow Hansoo after reading the Quirae’s memories.

‘What a sight.’

Looking at the bright blue sphere through the glass panel, it felt like she was walking through space.

Like she had become a God who could walk in the air.

The Quirae wasn’t interested in anything other than eating, so it hadn’t looked down.

But looking at the scene down here, it was truly marvelous.

At this moment, Kiriell heard Enbi Arin’s voice.

“...Heh, Melchizedek. I didn’t expect that thing to keep something like this hidden beneath the Aokan.”

She hadn’t even dreamt of something like this when she was saving the people.

‘Damn... I didn’t even know what the enemy had up their sleeves. Why did I even try to defeat them?’

Thinking back to it, she was embarrassed beyond reason.

They had taken her hostage, used her, made her attack Hansoo, and some mysterious armor had almost killed her.

‘Wait... This does feel familiar.’

But according to her own memories, she had never been here.

As Enbi Arin looked around curiously, Kiriell also roamed around and inspected the surrounding area.

There were three distinct things about this place.

The giant crystal that was supplying a tremendous amount of

energy upwards.

The devoured corpses of a strange race that were barely maintaining their shape.

And the dried-up blue armor that race had apparently worn.

As Kiriell looked at the dried-up armor, she also came to the same question Hansoo had before.

‘What the... Then where did Hansoo’s armor come from?’

It looked like Melchizedek had been the one to find it.

And it had planned to use the corpses and the energy here to raise the Quirae and send them away.

It should have acquired the blue armor here as well.

But if every other armor had dried up, why was Hansoo’s still functioning?

‘Do the dried-up ones still function?’

Kiriell, who had the Dragon God Armor, reached out with her hands towards the blue armor in anticipation.

Although the Dragon God Armor she had on was strong, it was still a bit weaker in comparison to the blue armor Hansoo wore.

Although Enbi Arin could not control the blue armor and had almost died from it, that was a story of the past.

They, who had risen up to the level of a 3-Star, could easily support the blue armor with their mana.

But Kiriell was left disappointed after touching the blue armor.

...SSSSSSS...

The blue armor disintegrated to dust the moment she touched it.

She had wondered, but indeed, these were all useless.

Completely dried up.

She grew even more curious about Hansoo’s armor and started to

use her Psychometry.

‘Let’s see... Something should come up if I search this room.’

And soon—

—ooooooooong—

Her upgraded Psychometry started to sweep through the room.

.....

As Kiriel and Enbi Arin searched the area below—

Kyaaaak!

—a battle was raging on above.

Well, it was more like a massacre than a battle.

Kyaaaak!

Countless Quirae were melting down from the red clouds.

Hansoo smiled bitterly as he looked below at the hard exoskeletons and the human appearances all melting down into nothingness.

“I am sorry that I couldn’t rescue you...”

“Krrrrrk... ugh.”

Hansoo mumbled as he looked at the women who were giving birth to more Quirae.

There was nothing he could do after the Quirae had infected them.

Nothing except to send them off peacefully.

So he had to clean this place up thoroughly.

If he didn’t, then the others coming up after them might end up as sacrifices as well.

The Quirae’s reproduction speed was infamous, even within the Abyss.

Like the Ark-Roa, they were a top priority target for any force once found.

The third floor of the Abyss, which had ignored this, had become the Quirae's lair.

‘It was insane.’

Evolving through humans was just the beginning.

The stronger the thing eaten, the longer its digestion, and it would go through more levels of evolution.

Humans bred 3rd-level Quirae, and the strange race here bred 5th-level Quirae.

Hansoo thought back to scenes created by the ones who had evolved past 20 levels and focused back on cleaning again.

He wanted to make this place, the Aokan, clean at least.

—boom!—

The red clouds that had been drifting around him started vigorously acting up and expanded at a crazy rate.

Kyaaak!

Aaaahh!

Hansoo went around Aokan while listening to the screams and soon reached the area where Kiriell had fought before.

‘Tsk. They all died.’

Hansoo shook his head as he looked at traces of the nine—not even their corpses had remained.

Since Kiriell wouldn't attack them first, there was only one reason this had happened.

‘There are always those who look to attack from the back.’

—clank—

—clank—

Hansoo looked around at the nine sets of Dragon God Armor on the ground and then picked up three.

The others had been damaged too much to be of use, but these three still looked functional.

If he gave one to Enbi Arin, then she would use it well.

Hansoo stood up after taking the three sets of armor and then looked at the control center at the back.

‘Not bad. She does have some ability.’

Hansoo thought as he looked at the control center cut cleanly in two.

Even if the Kiriél’s fang was a gift from the fairy.

Even if she had become a 3-Star.

Cutting something like that in two in such a clean manner was not easy.

But she had done it.

As soon as she climbed to the level of a 3-Star.

Hansoo whistled at the sight but then frowned.

‘...?’

The nine Dragon God Soldiers were dead.

But there were traces of teleportation.

Traces of minimal troubleshooting on the control tower, enough to reactivate it.

Hansoo frowned and thought back to Kiriél’s words.

‘N-Aroel... Was that his name?’

—sssss!—

As Hansoo melted away the rest of the control center—
“Hansoo!”

—Enbi Arin and Kiriel shouted from a distance as they quickly dashed towards him.

Hansoo chuckled as he looked at the two arriving before him.

“You finished it quickly. Here’s a present, Arin.”

—clank—

Hansoo handed Enbi Arin the Dragon God Armor still in the best condition of the three.

“Thank you. I’ll use it well.”

There would be countless battles ahead of them.

The better their equipment, the better their situation would be.

—clakakakak!—

The moment Enbi Arin touched the Dragon God Armor, the armor quickly detached into countless pieces and surrounded her body.

Hansoo listened to the sounds of friction between the metal pieces and spoke to Kiriel.

“I wonder if you had fun looking at the museum. Did you enjoy watching the mummies and the ancient artifacts?”

The corpses and armor that looked at least hundreds of years old.

It wasn’t a stretch to call it a museum at that point.

Kiriel shrugged her shoulders and replied:

“Sure, I didn’t even need an audio guide.”

Hansoo chuckled.

‘If I had an ability like that, I would have loved going to places like the museum.’

An ability to read the past would be fun to use in a place like a museum.

Hansoo cleaned up his useless thoughts and asked:

“So, did you find out what happened to the armor?”

Kiriel’s expression turned serious and replied:

“Yes.”

As to how only one armor could stay preserved.

She figured some things out as she read the past.

“That... something wore it until recently.”

“It was worn?”

Kiriel nodded.

“Yes.”

Hansoo realized what had happened from this short conversation.

“So... There are still surviving owners of this blue armor.”

Kiriel nodded with a dark expression.

.....

—kuuuuuuooooo—

N-Akuon wore an excited expression as he listened to N-Aroel’s second story.

“...So, other than those aliens and that new race, there’s another race still alive?”

N-Aroel nodded.

“Yes. I like that you’re quick to understand. After going into that hole, everything else was a corpse, but one was still alive.”

“But... how? You said it was wearing that strange armor?”

N-Akuon made a confused expression.

He knew how the armor could’ve stayed functional and not dried up.

If it were equipped onto somebody still alive, it could absorb the

energy from the host and maintain itself.

But according to what he'd heard, that armor was evil beyond reason.

The host should've long been dead from having that much energy absorbed.

But N-Aroel chuckled.

"Didn't I mention that crystal before?"

"Oh..."

N-Akuon nodded.

The crystal that supplied a tremendous amount of energy.

If one supplied themselves with energy from that crystal, it could explain how the owner of that blue armor had survived.

Since that ridiculous amount of energy could easily supply the blue armor.

N-Aroel continued to speak.

"Maybe... the host had been able to survive thanks to the armor. A symbiotic relationship of a sort?"

The blue armor sucked energy from its owner and in return used its life support functions to keep the host alive.

The host supplied the armor with energy and barely managed to survive.

And as he heard up to this point—

—a question appeared inside N-Akuon's head.

"Then... where did the host go? The owner of the blue armor."

N-Aroel laughed as he said:

"I love how well you understand these things. Right. That's the third story I'm about to tell you."

N-Aroel pointed towards the head of the Nelkipa, the final

destination of the aliens, and spoke.

Chapter 372: Inheritance War (2)

“The third fun story?”

N-Aroel nodded at N-Akuon’s question.

“Yes. It’s a fun story. Melchizedek took one of the bodies from that race and went up. It was too much of a waste to use it as fodder and throw it away.”

N-Akuon nodded.

If it was really a race as powerful as that, even a corpse was valuable.

But it wouldn't be as good as a live one.

There was still a question in his mind.

“...What will it do with the body?”

N-Aroel shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t know. Maybe use it to turn the situation around? You see, it’s not in the greatest position right now.”

“Not in a good position? Hmm...”

N-Akuon could not understand the meaning behind that.

According to what he’d heard, Melchizedek had prepared meticulously.

It had succeeded in the rebellion, swept away the civilians of Ankara, and gained control over Nelkipa.

For someone who controlled that strange insectoid race, what could it have issues with?

N-Aroel smiled at N-Akuon’s words.

“Can you see that over there? That cannon-like thing.”

N-Akuon peeked his head out and looked out of the ship to the place N-Aroel was pointing to.

N-Aroel's finger was pointing directly at the Nelkipa.

The spikes at the back of Nelkipa to be exact.

They called them spikes relative to the whole of Nelkipa, but those things were dozens of kilometers tall at least.

That size was actually comparable, or even taller, to the skyscrapers in Ankara.

It had a strange design as well.

N-Akuon was at a loss as he looked at the metallic spikes—each of them seemed to have a hole in the center.

“No way... Is that really a weapon?”

One of the technicians of the fleet had actually come up with a theory.

That those spikes could be weapons.

But that theory was soon ignored.

Because of one reason.

“If that was a weapon, why isn't Melchizedek using it?”

N-Akuon asked N-Aroel fervently.

Well, it was more of a fear-stricken expression.

Of course.

That giant creature and the giant cannon.

The energy felt from within it was endless.

If that thing started firing at them, then both the fleets and the planet of Ankara wouldn't be able to escape from turning into a sea of flames.

He could only feel fear.

So he had ignored that possibility.

If that was a weapon, why wasn't Melchizedek retaliating after

they attacked with Photon Strikes?

—boomboomboom—

—boomboom—

N-Akuon looked at the giant creature that was flying through the countless rays of Photon Strikes as if they were just a light drizzle.

“Bingo. That’s the important part. Do you know why it isn’t attacking?”

“...Tell me.”

A part of him wanted to guess it as a challenge, but he was truly desperate for the answer.

N-Aroel looked at N-Akuon’s thirsty expression and smiled.

“It’s because Melchizedek doesn’t have complete control over Nelkipa.”

“...”

“And that’s why Melchizedek needs to turn the situation around. I don’t know what he’ll do though.”

“Hmm...”

Another question appeared inside N-Akuon’s head.

He no longer cared about how Melchizedek would use that new race’s body.

Something that he was even more curious about had popped up.

“...Who? Who’s causing Melchizedek this much trouble?”

Who had the power to?

“Let’s see...”

N-Aroel chuckled as he scanned the Nelkipa below.

.....

—rumble—

At the head of the giant Nelkipa.

Roaaaar

One man listened to the cries of the Nelkipa, which was maintaining its course towards Ankara despite the countless artillery shells smashing onto its body, and he cursed out loud.

“F***ing hell. I don’t even know why they fire these things when they don’t work anyway. Annoying.”

Countless artillery shells were continuously raining down on him.

Not that it mattered.

—boom!—

A Photon Strike slammed onto the man, but he just dusted himself off in an annoyed manner.

“Damn it. I hate saunas.”

The Photon Strike that had even burned Hansoo at the 2-Star level didn’t leave a single scratch on that man.

It wasn’t like the man was covered in the nano-coating anyway.

The man had easily blocked off the artillery shells with a thin mana barrier above his skin. He spoke to the woman standing next to him.

“Hey, could you stop that?”

The man looked perplexed at the woman next to him, who was stabbing herself with a strange spike.

Despite the spike puncturing her skin and causing her to bleed, she continued her actions with a dull expression.

‘Ugh, I can never get used to that.’

The woman snapped in anger.

“Shut up, don’t meddle in my hobbies. Focus on how you’re

going to deal with that thing instead.”

“...I don’t think I can do anything.”

—oooooong—

The man, Ares Valentine, mumbled as he looked at the groups of soldiers marching around the giant fortress in the distance.

Of course, those little toys couldn’t stop them.

They could rip them apart like paper.

But the issue was the ones behind them.

2-Star Transcendents that had been modified and even equipped with armor.

As well as the tremendous amount of energy supplied from the crystal in Aokan.

‘No, the crystal in there is even bigger than the crystal in Aokan.’

Ares Valentine frowned.

The main crystal of the Nelkipa—the core that supplied it with energy.

And the modified transcendents that were setting up defenses using the energy from the crystal.

Even if they were 3-Star Transcendents, they’d end up as a couple of rags once they stepped in there.

Elis Valentine, the woman who was listening to Ares’s words, frowned as she snapped again.

“That’s why I said we should’ve taken that first, you dumb bastard.”

“...How could I have known this would happen? And I thought this was all we needed.”

The man looked at the giant crystal behind him.

—oooooong—

It wasn't as large as the main crystal, but it was much larger than the one below Aokan.

One main crystal.

The sub-crystal behind him and the one in the distance that Elis Valentine was defending.

These three crystals were the main control centers of Nelkipa.

'All this energy... just to provide enough energy to control this thing.'

Ares was at a loss.

The energy that he could feel from the crystal behind him was something that even he, a 3-Star Transcendent, feared slightly.

And all this energy was just a tiny fraction that came out from the artificial core of the Nelkipa.

'Damn. We have to take control over this Nelkipa... Or if we can find the method to control all this energy.'

Ares Valentine frowned and felt regret.

They had looked down on Melchizedek a bit too much.

They'd thought that they could easily deal with Melchizedek's toys, and then shred apart Kang Hansoo since they were both 3-Star Transcendents.

But after prying into the whole thing, what was all this?

Melchizedek had used its intensive knowledge and control over this giant creature to arm its underlings.

And as a result, they couldn't even approach the main crystal and were tied down trying to protect the two sub-crystals.

'Should I have studied instead of just fighting all the time?'

Ares Valentine lamented as he looked at the crystal behind him.

If he knew how to control this energy, then he would've long

since charged in there and crushed Melchizedek's skull.

The energy behind him was more than enough to do that.

Of course, something like that wasn't possible for him.

This was not something one could do with a short amount of studying.

Only something like Melchizedek would be able to.

'I need to accept what I have to accept.'

Ares Valentine looked at his twin sister, Elis Valentine, and asked: "What are you going to do?"

Elis Valentine pointed towards Melchizedek's fortress in the distance and replied: "We might have the strength to defend all of this, but nothing will change if we just stick around here, right?"

"Mhm."

"And charging in there will be a piece of cake?"

"Yup.'

"So taking control of the Nelkipa is the same as well?"

"Yes."

Elis clapped lightly and then replied.

"Good, let's begin."

"Damn it..."

Ares made a flustered expression.

There was only one thing they could do now.

"You start first. I'll join you soon."

"Alright, I won't see you off. Take care."

With these words—

—boooooom!—

—Elis's body quickly disappeared towards the crystal in the

distance.

Ares shrugged at this scene and then moved towards the sub-crystal behind him.

—ooooooooong!—

The crystal that was overflowing with energy.

He had no way to control this energy at the moment.

It was too much for him to handle.

Melchizedek might be able to use it with its amazing technology, but he didn't have a talent like that.

‘Maybe if I had the Acknowledgement.’

Well, the thing he was about to do didn't really require him to control this energy.

‘Let's see... Time for some fireworks before I go up.’

Ares chuckled coldly.

He'd tried so hard to keep this crystal, but if he couldn't then it was better to destroy it.

And soon—

—booom!—

—a tremendous amount of energy extended out from Ares's body and shook the crystal.

.....

—rumble—

“I expected a greeting party, but it looks like that's not happening.”

“Yeah. I expected them to do something as soon as we arrived.”

Kiriel and Enbi Arin were at a loss as they walked out from the giant elevator.

They had prepared themselves for the worst, but nothing was here.

But this only lasted for a moment.

—boooooom!—

Kiriel and Enbi Arin quickly woke up from their delusions.

It was not the time to let down their guard.

“These crazy bastards... What the hell are they doing?”

This tremendous aura.

Two overbearing auras exploded out from the giant plane on the Nelkipa’s head.

From two edges of the plane.

No, it wasn’t just two.

—boooooom!—

As two auras exploded out from two sides of the plane, another aura that was as big as both of them combined exploded out from between them.

Three energies ruptured outwards like the eruption of a volcano.

The tremendous amount of energy pushed against their skin, and Hansoo mumbled: “I guess they didn’t have time to. They seem to be busy with their own jobs.”

“It’s time... for us to do our jobs as well.”

Hansoo mumbled as he looked at the three giant auras exploding around them.

—rumble—

Roaaaar!

The Nelkipa, which had been ignoring the countless artillery shells, started to cry out.

Chapter 373: Inheritance War (3)

“It seems the situation isn’t quite right for a picnic, huh?”

—rumble—

Kiriell mumbled as she looked at the three auras exploding out from the giant plane.

It was a joke, but nobody laughed.

Those bursts of energy continued increasing in strength.

Oaaaaaaaarrrr!

The Nelkipa also seemed to have felt the energy as it cried out.

Enbi Arin gritted her teeth as she listened.

“...Insane bastards. They really did it.”

“Do you know something?”

Enbi Arin nodded.

She had climbed up here and had fought countless battles over multiple floors.

She had been here.

She had seen the crystal below.

She was just surprised because it was her first time seeing the blue armor and the corpses. She had also found out that the crystal existed in Aokan as well.

The main crystal that controlled the movements of Nelkipa and controlled the flow of energy.

The two sub-crystals that controlled the subsystems and soldiers in Nelkipa.

One would only have complete control over Nelkipa if they had all three of these crystals.

‘It seems they divided it between themselves. Even if they’re

dislikable, this isn't bad.'

Enbi Arin clenched her teeth as she felt the three distinct auras around them.

If the Valentine siblings—Clementine's underlings—or Melchizedek had complete control over Nelkipa, then this giant ray wouldn't be flying around in such a calm manner.

It was lucky for them.

But the situation still wasn't that great.

The two sides seemed to have taken extreme measures to reach a conclusion.

"...Do you know what their plans are?"

Enbi Arin nodded at Kiriel's question.

"I know about one, but not the other."

She knew what the Valentine siblings had chosen.

Self-destruction.

'They probably decided that gaining control over the Nelkipa was a bit too much.'

Enbi Arin gritted her teeth.

If they succeeded in destroying the crystals, this place would become a sea of flames.

The worse case scenario would be the death of this giant creature.

The people arriving after them wouldn't even have a single plot of land they could step on before being killed.

Even if this giant creature didn't die, those people would die from Ankara's attacks.

They had to take control of Nelkipa before it died and then take it far away from Ankara.

‘In the end, we have to deal with all three places.’

The issue was Melchizedek; she didn’t know what that thing was planning.

This was probably the reason why the twins had started up the self-destruction sequences as well.

They couldn’t charge in, and they didn’t know what Melchizedek was planning.

It would’ve been nice if they could charge in there, sweep everything clean and then go up.

‘The best situation would be to deal with them one at a time.’

Enbi Arin thought to herself.

Looking at it, Melchizedek and the siblings were all separated.

It would be best if the three of them dealt with Melchizedek and the twins one at a time.

But of course, there wasn’t enough time.

Even if they got to Melchizedek, it would have no meaning if one of the siblings succeeded. But it was too much of a risk to leave Melchizedek alone.

‘...That thing wouldn’t plan something useless.’

Enbi Arin asked Hansoo:

“What shall we do?”

Hansoo, in his blue armor, spoke with a heavy expression.

.....

—rumble—

‘Mmm... This is quite exhausting.’

Elis Valentine made a tired expression as she held onto the crystal.

She wasn’t really doing much.

She was just stimulating the energy within the crystal to make it go haywire.

But because of the energy within it, it was hard work.

‘Tsk. We can’t do anything.’

Elis looked at the spike by her waist that she’d used to stab her skin before.

Stabbing herself with the spike was the best thing to do when things got boring, but she had to hold herself back.

She had to finish this up quickly and then go up.

In a situation like this where they didn’t know what Melchizedek was planning, the easier they dealt with it, the better.

‘Let’s just finish this up fast and go up. I’ll ask for a holiday after I go up.’

Others wouldn’t know about what went on above, but she and Ares Valentine had the Soul Fragments, so they knew a few things.

According to what they heard, the two people in the Indigo Zone above were having the time of their lives.

They had performed well to a certain degree up until now, but hard work deserves a short holiday, right?

As Elis Valentine thought of climbing up and leisurely eating crystals and playing around— —chiiiiiiik—

—she felt a faint aura in the distance.

It was a bit too far for her to feel in detail, but that aura was sharp beyond reason.

And as she felt this...

Elis Valentine was shocked.

‘...3-Star? There are 3-Stars?’

She couldn’t ignore that aura.

It was a similar aura to hers.

‘...There are still people who can become 3-Stars?’

Elis Valentine was truly shocked.

They had taken everyone with the slightest bit of potential and recruited them to their side. All the others had been turned into artificial Transcendents by Melchizedek.

She’d never thought that someone else would be able to rise to the level of a 3-Star Transcendent.

‘Is it him?’

She had heard about it before from Taehee, the owner of the Soul Fragments.

That the man called Kang Hansoo had risen up to become a Transcendent, so be careful and deal with him quickly if possible.

Of course, Taehee chuckled at this too.

A man who had become a 1-Star in the Green Zone below.

He had somehow managed to deal with a brat who was Jang Oh’s successor and had risen to a 2-Star, but that wasn’t much for them to worry about.

The difference between a 2-Star and a 3-Star was actually tremendous.

If they were truly wary of him, then they would’ve long gone down and dealt with him while in the middle of their fight against Melchizedek.

They wouldn’t want to overlook an unknown variable in such a tense situation.

But of course, they hadn’t gone down.

They’d only focused on Melchizedek before them.

It was for one reason.

He was weak.

Someone who'd recently risen to a 2-Star level could not rise to become a 3-Star Transcendent in such a short time.

Even if he did rise, he would be much weaker than them.

But this aura was truly overbearing.

'I see. You've arrived.'

She had been shocked.

At how he'd actually risen up to the level of a 3-Star Transcendent.

He really lived up to being the person who'd wrecked apart the lower floors.

But that was it.

Elis Valentine realized that defending her position was the right choice instead of going down and dealing with him.

She realized that there was no point in showing her back to Melchizedek just to deal with Hansoo.

'Come.'

—chwaaaaaak!—

Elis Valentine stopped pouring energy into the crystal and grasped the 50-cm-long spike by her waist.

—tremble—

Elis Valentine couldn't prevent her own cravings after holding onto the spike and started to stab herself again.

'Ahhh....'

At first, she started on her arm, a location which wouldn't cause much trouble in a fight.

But the location of the stabs started slowly rising up.

Towards her heart.

—pushuk—pushuk—

As the stabs slowly approached her heart, the previous wounds healed.

—tatatak!—

The owner of that aura had already appeared before her eyes.

And as he appeared—

“...?”

—Elis put the spike away, stopping short of stabbing it into her heart, and frowned.

“...I didn’t know that Kang Hansoo was a female. Did you have plastic surgery or something?”

The woman who had flown across the air, Kiriel, smiled.

“Hansoo is a bit too busy to deal with trash like you, so as his fan, I’ve come in his stead. As a fan, it’s my duty to let him focus on his duties, right?”

Elis frowned as she spat out a reply.

“...Not bad. So you’re one of his slaves, huh?”

The compliment was not directed to Kiriel, but to Hansoo.

Kiriel giggled as she replied:

“What do you mean a slave? I’m just a fan. It seems you have some issues with your mouth. Or maybe your ears.”

Although she was smiling, the bloodthirsty aura that was radiating from her body kept rising.

An extremely tense situation.

Elis Valentine chuckled as she looked at Kiriel and the Dragon God Armor.

“You have a fun toy equipped. Anyway... doesn’t he care about his own fans? To let them die in a place like this?”

Kiriel looked at Elis who had spoken with a smile and replied with a smile as well.

“Don’t worry. You’ll be the one getting f***ed.”

“Woah. Language. Anyway... are you sure you should be here? What about my brother?”

Kiriel shrugged her shoulders.

“Someone else went there.”

Kiriel said, pointing towards the other crystal in the far distance.

.....

“Woah. It’s been a while. Have you been well?”

Enbi Arin clenched her fists at Ares Valentine's words.

“Yup. I’ve slept very well, thanks to some bastards.”

“Hahaha! It seems you had a good dream. Was it about me?”

Enbi Arin frowned at Ares’s sleek words which resembled something a lover would say and then said: “The issue was that you appeared a bit too much. A real nightmare.”

Enbi Arin glared at Ares and spat out:

“You... you were my husband.”

“Oh my. Melchizedek really did put in some effort. He fulfilled one of my small wishes.”

Ares Valentine chuckled at the word ‘husband’.

Chapter 374: Inheritance War (4)

—rumble!—

Hansoo looked at the castle-like structure that seemed to be made up of layers of machines and continued to run towards it.

The machine castle seemed to let out energy that was larger than that of the two energies bursting at the sides.

The machine castle—clearly belonging to Melchizedek—didn't seem to be welcoming Hansoo.

‘It doesn't look prepared for a guest.’

—boom!—

Hansoo looked at the pillar of light that rose into the skies in the distance.

Then—

—rumble—

—the spikes embedded around Hansoo's now upgraded body started to suck out mana at a rapid pace.

—kakakakak!—

Similar to how icicles form, the armor turned into a crystalline structure as it devoured more mana and quickly covered his body.

And Hansoo's Demonic Dragon Reinforcement covered the blue armor with another layer of protection.

—boooooom!—

Artillery shells were being fired from a distance and started smashing at Hansoo's body.

Bright blue strikes that smashed the ground all around them.

The force of the strikes was so intense that it even dug apart the Nelkipa skin, which had withstood the Photon Strikes.

It was a strength that was incomparable to anything before.

—boom!—

—boooooom!—

His Demonic Dragon Reinforcement deflected the strikes away, but the attacks succeeded in stopping him from charging forward.

Hansoo frowned.

Even Melchizedek could not create this powerful of an attack with his technology.

And Hansoo soon realized the answer.

‘Crystal.’

—boom!—

The attacks were mixed with bright blue energy.

Hansoo sighed and tightly clenched his hammer— Melchizedek’s forces were using the energy from the crystal.

At this rate, it would be hard to advance even if his body could withstand it.

The ground beneath his feet was breaking apart just by defending against these attacks.

‘I’m not really into being whacked around.’

Withstanding firepower of this scale would cause his Pandemic Blade to lose a large amount of strength as well.

The thing he needed now was a single, powerful strike.

Then—

—chichichichik—

—five dragons popped out from Hansoo’s heart.

Five dragons that were much thicker and deeper in color than in the past.

Each one was so overbearing that they seemed like they would soar into the skies at any moment.

The dragons were made from a 3-Star level of mana and power, and they quickly flew into the hammer, condensing into a single point.

Hansoo gathered this strength and slammed down onto the ground.

Then—

—boooooom!—

Like an Earth Dragon swimming through the ground—

—dozens of black lightning bolts flew through the ground in all directions, each bolt strengthened by Hansoo's Nine Dragons Strike.

Each bolt of lightning flew through the Nelkipa's skin like a dragon and soon smashed into the machine castle in the distance.

A bright blue shield powered by energy from the crystal started to defend the army, but it was only for a moment.

—kaduk!—

The dozens of black lightning bolts smashed through the shield like a thin layer of ice and attacked the mechanical soldiers.

Then—

—boooooom!—

—a tremendous shockwave shook the area.

The mechanical soldiers who were directly hit by that strike melted down from the sheer amount of energy, like ice cream under a hot sun.

And it didn't stop there.

—rumble!—

The electromagnetic field created from the explosions started to spread through the area as well.

Of course, Melchizedek's forces had some level of resistance towards it, but there was a limit.

—chiiijijik—

The soldiers, whose circuits had all burned up by the electromagnetic storm, made strange noises and fell to the ground.

—rumble—

With that one strike, the rain of attacks had diminished to a degree.

But Hansoo knew—

—that this wasn't the end.

—kigigigik—

—kiririk—

Hansoo watched hundreds of soldiers rebuild their bodies, preparing to attack him again and continued to dash towards the castle again.

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

The attacks still struck him, but at a much-diminished aura and strength.

—whoooosh!—

Thanks to this, Hansoo had been able to move towards the castle at a much faster pace.

‘This isn't really my style, but...’

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

Hansoo withstood the countless strikes like a tank and started

thinking.

Although he liked single, powerful strikes, this really wasn't his hobby.

He avoided battles as much as possible and focused on his objective.

He saved his strength and only focused on taking the neck of his objective.

Up until now, he'd fought in the frontlines because the situation had demanded it, but he personally preferred being an assassin over a warrior.

Even if it took a bit longer, it was a much more efficient and safe job.

But of course, the current situation didn't allow it.

He had to deal with this as fast as possible.

It wasn't just Melchizedek, either.

Even if he dealt with this place, but if they lost at the other two places, it was still a failure in the end.

He had to deal with this place as fast as possible and support the other two.

Of course, it would be even better if Kiriel and Enbi Arin could deal with their opponents and then come to help him.

But it didn't seem like it would be that easy.

Their opponents really didn't seem easy.

'The Valentine siblings... I'll leave it to you two, Kiriel and Enbi Arin.'

—boom!—

Hansoo thought about these four names as he continued to charge through the attacks, the energy behind each strike causing his body temperature to steadily rise up.

.....

—rumble—

“Woah... he’s really something, isn’t he?”

Ares whistled as he felt the vibrations in the air and the shockwaves in the ground.

Even if he was far away, the shockwaves were something to behold.

Melchizedek’s personal castle that even they didn’t dare to enter.

Huge shockwaves and the sounds of loud explosions were continuously resonating from Melchizedek’s castle.

‘...So Kang Hansoo is the one that went there? He’s more stupid than I thought.’

Ares Valentine was really shocked as he suppressed the sweat rolling down from the side of his neck.

‘Need to keep calm.’

In reality, he was kind of glad.

Although he didn’t think he would lose, but if someone that stupid came to him then things would become very annoying.

People like that thought along the lines of ‘It’s all fine as long as I can smash apart my opponent’s body before mine gets smashed apart.’.

From the opponent’s point of view, it would be a battle without profit even if they won, and they were likely to receive a large amount of damage.

The most annoying kind of person to fight.

If he had come here, it would have truly been a dirty battle.

Ares Valentine thought that his luck was quite good.

‘A beauty has arrived instead.’

Ares Valentine chuckled as he looked at Enbi Arin, who stared at him with cold eyes.

“I’m really curious, but did you really come here to win?”

—crackle—

Ares Valentine moved his hand and cracked it as he asked.

The armor she had on seemed to be quite useful.

Even more so if one took into the fact that it was hard to find armor that Transcendents could use.

But that was it.

He could estimate her level.

Enbi Arin was a tiny chick that had just risen to the 3-Star level.

It was unpleasant to call himself this, but he was an old man in terms of 3-Star Transcendents.

‘Not all 3-Stars are the same.’

He was excited.

Even though battles made him tense.

But there was nothing more fun than a battle where one knew they’d win.

Enbi Arin clenched her fists as she muttered:

“Of course I came to win, you damned bastard.”

“Hehe.”

Ares Valentine looked at Enbi Arin and thought she was sexy.

He really liked Enbi Arin.

A woman who was this strong.

As well as her sexy appearance and fit physique.

And her fiery temper.

His most ideal type.

It was why he'd tried so hard to invite Enbi Arin to their side.

Even while listening to the storm of curses from Elis.

He was a bit upset that Elis's attitude towards him had grown colder, but he didn't regret his decision.

If there was no longer any love in this damned world, then how tragic would that be?

'If I had gone up to the 3-Star level first, then... I might've been able to have you.'

So he had tried so hard.

To become strong enough to suppress Enbi Arin.

If he surprised her with his power than she would have no choice but to join them first.

While keeping Enbi Arin as his goal, he had risen up to a 3-Star, and the first thing he'd done afterward was to seek her out.

But he had been a step too late—Melchizedek had taken her.

He had lamented this.

The Enbi Arin under Melchizedek's control was not the Enbi Arin he liked.

So he had given up on her, but nobody would know of his feelings.

He had run so hard after one goal, but that goal had disappeared.

He'd experienced the sensation of having his heart ripped apart.

But that goal had appeared before him again.

And still with her own mind intact.

'Today... is really my lucky day.'

Ares Valentine's heart started beating faster.

His goal had appeared again before he went up.

How great was this?

Although it wasn't the best situation that she was now a 3-Star, but that didn't matter.

Since he would win.

'Enbi Arin. Let's go together.'

Ares Valentine looked at Enbi Arin with a trembling heart.

.....

'...Ares Valentine. That crazy bastard. He's not spouting some nonsense about his love and ignoring his duties, right?'

Elis Valentine, who had been dealing with Kiriel, thought of her younger brother and then frowned.

Hearing that her younger brother's crush had gone to him kept on bugging her.

But Elis Valentine decided to ignore it.

'I just need to deal with this quickly and go over.'

No matter how brash he was, he wouldn't ignore her own words.

Elis decided to handle this quickly and smiled at Kiriel.

"I have something to do, so let's finish this quickly."

"Even if you didn't say that... I was planning on doing the same thing."

'Damn. She's quite good, though.'

—spit—

The surroundings had long been destroyed by their confrontations.

And within a giant hole in the ground created from one of their collisions.

Kiriel spat out some blood as she touched the cheek that Elis had struck and frowned.

She was really strong.

‘I wonder if I can really stop her... Damn.’

Kiriel frowned as she looked at the raging crystal behind Elis.

Chapter 375: Inheritance War (5)

“Captain, what shall we do now?”

“Mmm.”

R-Koronaita Nell looked below as he listened to the lieutenant commander’s words.

At the tremendous amount of energy that even they could feel in the space above Nelkipa.

That energy was flowing out from Nelkipa’s head.

From three separate locations.

‘...It’s not something we can ignore.’

R-Koronaita Nell fell into deep thought.

Originally, they’d assumed that Aokan was the core structure of Nelkipa and tried to take over that place.

They had thought so because the Mimir surrounded it.

But looking into it, the Aokan was just a side structure, and this was the true core.

‘If we knew this earlier, then we wouldn’t have wasted our forces. We would have come here right away.’

R-Koronaita Nell frowned.

Because they had been led astray by some useless place, they had lost nine suits of Dragon God Armor.

At this point, he was now thinking that Aokan had been a trap.

A trap to lead his focus somewhere else while the enemy accomplished their original goals.

Of course, if that insect race had successfully warped to Angkara, it would have been a catastrophe.

He didn’t regret his decision to go to Aokan because of this, but

the end result was still an issue.

They had lost nine Dragon God Soldiers.

And those nine Dragon God Soldiers hadn't even stopped the Quantum Transmission either.

The two aliens had done it all.

Losing nine Dragon God Soldiers was something that would cause a bit of trouble even to him.

He was sure that this incident would cause a few of the families to charge at him and chew him apart.

They would say that an incompetent fleet master like him should receive retribution.

'And try to fill up their own stomachs in one go.'

R-Koronaita Nell frowned.

He could not let that happen.

'I need to deal with N-Aroel first.'

If someone who had witnessed everything with his own eyes were to tell the truth, then his situation would become much worse.

If he could push the story that he'd sacrificed the Dragon God Soldiers to stop the Quantum Transmission and twist some facts, he could deal with the flames for now.

'Killing him would be too eye-catching... I'll just have to handle his words.'

If he knew that this would happen, then he would have dealt with N-Aroel the moment he came up here, but it was too late.

If somebody who had safely returned were to suddenly die, then the hyenas would jump on him for that as well.

R-Koronaita Nell spoke to his lieutenant commander.

“Call N-Aroel to the captain’s room.”

“Understood. But what of the situation below?”

R-Koronaita Nell frowned at these words.

‘Mmm... What to do?’

He wanted to throw everything they had at that structure.

Those bombs didn’t make him feel at ease at all.

He wanted to sweep the three locations with a huge burst of firepower.

But his instincts, hardened by decades of experience, made it clear.

That it wouldn’t be that simple.

A strange incident on top of a strange creature.

‘Wait... I can just handle this together.’

According to what he’d heard, N-Aroel was an amazing scientist.

He would know some things about the situation below since he had survived there for quite a long time as well.

He didn’t know how much N-Aroel knew, but it would be of great help if he could pry that information out from him.

“I’ll decide after I speak to N-Aroel. Continue watching over Nelkipa until then and if a situation that could threaten the fleet arises... attack without holding back.”

“Understood.”

‘I should hurry.’

The situation really was dire.

R-Koronaita Nell quickly walked towards the captain’s room as he thought to himself.

.....

“You called for me?”

“Yes. Sit.”

‘Look at him.’

R-Koronaita Nell looked at N-Aroel and frowned. The man had on a calm expression.

He continued to stare at N-Aroel with a frown and then shook his head as he said: “Let’s get to the main point. Do you know anything about the situation below?”

R-Koronaita Nell asked with a hardened expression.

He really didn’t like N-Aroel’s attitude.

An N-level shouldn’t be this calm in front of an R-level.

They should be wary and careful of every action and every word.

Since the R-levels had the strength to change their entire lives.

That was the difference between their ranks.

Even more so to an apex R-level like him.

‘If his responses aren’t satisfactory... I’ll just clean him up.’

N-Aroel wouldn’t like that, of course.

Unlike before, his current mood wasn’t quite the best.

He was actually looking forward to seeing N-Aroel stutter out his words.

He could handle him with much more ease if that happened.

But unlike R-Koronaita Nell’s expectations, N-Aroel spoke with a smile.

“Of course. I know very well about the matters below.”

“...You know well?”

R-Koronaita Nell frowned.

An unexpected answer had come out.

‘He knows well?’

On his way over here, R-Koronaita Nell had lowered his expectations towards N-Aroel’s answers.

Because... he wouldn’t have been reduced to such a state if he’d known a lot.

Melchizedek had ambushed them to drive out the forces of Ankara and then focused on his objectives from that point on.

If N-Aroel and others knew a lot about Nelkipa and Melchizedek, then they wouldn’t have been pushed back this badly.

But how could N-Aroel, who’d hidden around Aokan like a rat, know anything?

‘That’s what I thought at least, but... he knows a few things, huh?’

R-Koronaita Nell was shocked but soon spoke with a serious tone.

“Speak. What’s going on below? What is that high energy reaction?”

N-Aroel laughed as he said:

“Simple. Those three locations are the core locations to control Nelkipa, and by the looks of things... someone is trying to make them self-destruct.”

“Huh? Self-destruct?”

R-Koronaita Nell made a confused expression.

Why were they trying it blow it up?

‘Melchizedek... Didn’t he want to take over Nelkipa?’

At R-Koronaita Nell’s words, N-Aroel suddenly looked as if he remembered something.

“Oh. Sorry about that, there was a misunderstanding. The ones trying to cause the self-destruction is not Melchizedek, but the aliens. Melchizedek is using the crystal for a different reason.”

“The aliens?”

N-Aroel nodded.

“Right. Those aliens... don’t really like each other. One side hates another, and another side hates them both. This is why they’re trying to destroy Nelkipa, so they won’t even have a place to come to anymore.”

“...Dumb creatures. Truly barbarians.”

R-Koronaita Nell was at a loss.

For them to go to such lengths to destroy each other.

They were apes.

At that moment—

“Hahaha!”

—N-Aroel suddenly broke into laughter.

And R-Koronaita Nell was enraged at this sight.

‘This filthy...’

For an N-level to act like this in front of him.

There was nobody who had acted like this in the past.

But of course, R-Koronaita Nell couldn’t decide what to do with N-Aroel.

He’d never dealt with a situation like this before, so he didn’t know how to handle it.

He wanted to call the guards and torture N-Aroel, but he didn’t live his life like that.

He always thought through his actions, calculated how his actions would change things, and did not act on his emotions.

R-Koronaita Nell decided to take a step back and spoke to N-Aroel.

“What’s so funny?”

He didn't do anything, but he didn't hide his contempt.

N-Aroel shook his hands and said:

“Oh... I apologize. I just found it funny that you called the aliens barbarians because of their actions.”

“ ... ”

“For the fleet captain of the war planet, Angkara, to say something like that. Isn't it funny for someone who's lived his entire life killing his own kind to call something like this an act of barbarians?”

R-Koronaita Nell's expression turned gruesome.

‘...Is this guy crazy?’

He wasn't even angry anymore, but just simply at a loss for words.

What did he have backing him up for him to act so confidently?

He had heard that some people lost their sense of fear after spending a long time stranded by themselves.

R-Koronaita Nell looked at N-Aroel with a strange expression and then spoke with a severe tone.

“Watch your words. I am holding back a great deal right now, and you've done more than cross the line..”

“Right... Understood. If I hurt you with my words, then I apologize. Anyway, where was I... Ah! The crystal, right? Two of the reactions below will cause the crystals to self-destruct, and the other is Melchizedek's. They're using them for different purposes.”

“ ... ”

R-Koronaita Nell decided to hold back on what to do with N-Aroel and refocused on his original objective.

To understand the situation.

“So, what is Melchizedek planning?”

N-Aroel had said so just now.

That Melchizedek had a different goal from the aliens.

And in his opinion, that was the most important point at this moment.

N-Aroel chuckled.

“Right. That’s the most important part.”

N-Aroel breathed in and out and then asked R-Koronaita Nell.

“Captain. The Nelkipa over there. Do you know who created it?”

.....

—rumble!—

“Phew.”

‘I’ve entered at last.’

—chiiiiik—

Hansoo looked around as he cooled down his heated body.

He’d had to smash apart everything before entering because of their persistence, but in the end, he had managed to enter the castle.

But it seems like that was only the beginning.

‘What a greeting.’

A castle of machines, covered in machines.

Bright armor walking out from the darkness.

“Dragon God Armor... The crystal’s energy. Artificial Transcendents... He really spent a lot.”

Are you saying I must at least get through all this to meet you?

Hansoo muttered at the air.

Actually, it was quite loud.

More than enough for Melchizedek to hear.

And Melchizedek, who loved to talk, could have easily created a hologram before his eyes to reply.

But there was no response.

Which meant that there were two possibilities.

‘Either he thinks I’m not worth talking to, or...’

He was so focused on something that he didn’t even have time to talk.

‘What are you up to, Melchizedek?’

Hansoo looked into the dark depths of the machine castle and thought to himself.

Chapter 376: Inheritance War (6)

—boooooom!—

“Hahaha! What’s up? Try a bit harder!”

Elis Valentine laughed out loud as she charged towards Kiriel.

Despite her laughter, she was bleeding from her entire body.

Kiriel freaked out at the sight of Elis Valentine continuing to charge at her despite the countless wounds on her body.

‘I knew she was crazy, but... she’s just straight up mental.’

She realized that something was off with Elis’s head when she saw her stabbing herself with that spike.

But she didn’t expect her to be this crazy.

—kiiiiiiiiing!—

Kiriel activated the Dragon God Armor to its limits as she attacked Elis Valentine again.

—clank!—

Success.

The fang in Kiriel’s hand had cut enough flesh to reveal Elis Valentine’s ribs.

A wound that would cause people to freeze up in shock from the pain alone.

But Kiriel didn’t rejoice with this and instead hardened her muscles.

‘Damn it... Huup!’

“Hahahaha!”

—boom!—

Elis Valentine’s partially cut-off right hand smashed into Kiriel’s stomach.

‘Ugh!’

Kiriell breathed in deeply at the powerful force slamming her stomach, quickly regaining her balance as the blow flung her back.

—chiiii—

Kiriell dug her fingers into the ground, slowing herself from being flung backward.

‘Tsk...’

And she frowned as Elis Valentine approached her again with a smile.

—ssss—

The injuries on her body were healing at a visible pace.

New skin grew, and her body reabsorbed the leaking blood.

Broken bones mended and severed muscles healed.

A monstrous healing ability.

Even for a 3-Star Transcendent, it was abnormal.

She wasn’t at that level, not even close.

Elis’s spike had punctured her skin, and the wound was still bleeding.

‘...Annoying.’

Kiriell frowned as she looked at the completely healed Elis.

Elis made a creepy smile as if Kiriell’s expression made her feel happy.

“It seems you don’t have a Trait designed for battle? So how is it? Seeing a battle-specialized Trait?”

Kiriell shrugged.

“Eh, I’m not really envious or anything. I’m not insane like you.”

Rising to the 3-Star level had strengthened her Trait as well.

Unlike before, where she had to focus to read memories, she could now read memories just by touching someone briefly during a fight.

Elis's Trait was <Pain Nullification>.

She was resistant to pain.

A human's natural defense mechanism to feel pain did not exist inside her.

Actually, one could say it was more of a disorder than a Trait at this point.

But of course, her Trait allowed her to take this to another level.

She could save the pain she would otherwise feel and convert it into her own strength or even heal herself.

A very useful Trait in a battle.

A battle involved collective actions that put one through pain.

Of course, the healing rate wasn't crazy to the point that she could heal everything.

She was still losing out in the end.

But since Elis was giving away a rib to cut a single piece of Kiriell's flesh, Kiriell was the one truly losing out in this battle.

And another.

'...Damn. She wasn't poking her body around just for fun.'

Normally, she shouldn't be able to heal like that.

Calculating the injuries Kiriell had given to Elis, there wasn't enough damage to heal her to this degree.

But Elis had completely recovered.

There was only one reason for this.

She had saved up the pain with her Trait and waited.

'She's insanely efficient.'

She had accumulated her painful actions and used it to heal.

With her natural healing abilities, the injuries from her spikes were more than enough for her to mend her wounds.

And this was the result.

A near immortal body.

Elis giggled as she looked at Kiriel.

“Oh, don’t misunderstand. The thing I was doing before is my hobby. I’m not doing it because I need to.”

“...?”

Kiriel was at a loss.

‘This girl. She’s really mental.’

Elis continued to speak, enjoying Kiriel’s expression.

“You see, I was in a lot of pain before I came here in the past. A lot of pain. So much pain that I’d faint from it. But then it’s funny because you wake up from the pain. Every day is a living nightmare.”

Later on, the medication stopped working as well.

Struggling from pain day by day.

She wanted to die, but they wouldn’t let her.

“But there was at least one good thing about it.”

“...What is it?”

Elis laughed as she replied:

“When I used all my effort to pretend not to be in pain, people looked at me with admiration in their eyes.”

This had made her feel special.

It was something that others couldn’t do.

Withstanding pain that others couldn’t even imagine.

Her body felt full of pain, but that one thing was good.

And the Trait she had earned as she came over to this world...

Pain Nullification.

“I really like this world. I don’t hurt anymore. But unlike before, the people don’t look at me the same anymore. So I started this.”

—stab—

Kiriel watched as Elis stabbed herself again in a daze.

And Elis looked at her expression and smiled.

“Yes, that expression.”

“You crazy b****. These aren’t the eyes of admiration but eyes that think you’re f***ing insane.”

Elis shrugged her shoulders.

“Well, it’s all the same shit. They’re all surprised by me, right? Anyway, come at me. You have to stop me, right? I need to finish this up and go over to my brother too. Remember, this whole place will blow up if you don’t stop me.”

Looking tired, Kiriel mumbled:

“I’m coming, you crazy b****...”

Her entire body was creaking with pain but thanks to their chat, she had healed to a certain degree.

Kiriel stared at Elis and thought to herself: ‘I don’t know what to do, Hansoo... she’s more insane than I imagined.’

A crazy b**** could be dealt with if you beat them halfway to death, but she was also ridiculously strong.

Kiriel looked at Elis with a bitter expression.

.....

—boom!—

Hansoo frowned at the countless figures charging towards him.

‘These aren’t at a 3-Star level, but... for them to become this strong...’

The overflowing energy from the crystal.

And the Dragon God Armor that used this energy.

The modifications that pushed the body’s efficiency to its limits.

Melchizedek seemed to have taken it as a challenge to see how far one can push a 2-Star Transcendent. It had invested everything it had onto these Artificial Transcendents.

And they were showing him their might.

—boom!—

Hansoo’s Mjolnir and the blade from the Dragon God Armor collided as a huge sound reverberated.

—tudududuk!—

Of course, it couldn't withstand the strength of the 3-Star Transcendent Hansoo, so the blade had snapped.

But the other Artificial Transcendents did not miss this chance.

—whoosh!—

Two more attacks rushed in from the small gap created by the first Artificial Transcendent’s collision with Hansoo.

Including the one blocking his attacks, three Artificial Transcendents were raining attacks down on his body.

Hansoo frowned at seeing these attacks closing in on him from all directions and then let down his guard.

—pushuk!—

Three blades embedded themselves between the gaps of the blue armor.

And as if they felt ecstasy from the succession of their attacks, they all smirked a little.

A deep wound.

No matter how strong Hansoo was, this was still fatal.

One blade had even approached his heart.

Any small movement could rob Hansoo of his life.

But while the Artificial Transcendents were rejoicing, Hansoo voice called out: “I’m sure Melchizedek erased your emotions because they might interfere in battle.”

“...?”

Hansoo continued to speak as he looked at their confused expressions.

“I’m just saying, if you wish to rejoice then do it after everything’s over.”

Then—

—booooooooooom!—

—the hammer in Hansoo’s hand swung through the air and smashed through their heads in quick succession.

The Dragon God Armor and the overflowing energy of the crystal had tried to protect them, but it was all futile.

The seven dragons that he’d gathered while they stabbed him had sent all three heads flying away, one at a time.

“Haa...Haaa...”

...SSSSSS...

Hansoo healed his injury with his Immortal Soul as he looked around.

‘There’s still a few more left?’

Since he was trying to finish things quickly, he’d lost a significant amount of stamina.

Even the Immortal Soul had a limit in healing wounds from the

condensed mana—it took a considerable amount of effort for it to fully heal these wounds.

In a situation where he didn't know what Melchizedek was planning inside, he didn't have the leisure to be wasting his energy and stamina like this.

Hansoo passed by the corpses of the ones he'd killed off and quickly dashed further into the depths where he felt the crystal's aura.

The aura was continuously expanding.

It didn't look simple.

'Let's see. Let's see what you have hidden.'

—boom!—

Hansoo hastened towards the depths of Melchizedek's machine castle.

.....

"Who made that? That creature? Isn't it alive?"

N-Aroel shook his head.

"No way. Somebody created it."

"...It?"

Roaaaaaar!

R-Koronaita Nell freaked out as he looked at the giant creature, Nelkipa, as it flew through space.

'That... Somebody made that?'

A body with defensive properties that was countless times more superior than their proud fleet of flames.

Who had created that?

For what reason?

And as if N-Aroel had read R-Koronaita Nell's mind, he answered

his thoughts.

“That is a warship. A warship created by a certain race.”

“...That’s a warship?”

“It’s not even active by the way. It’s... just waking up?”

“What?”

N-Aroel laughed at R-Koronaita Nell’s dumbfounded expression and said: “It’s a warship. A ship designed for war. It’s not supposed to float around like a jellyfish. If it started up properly... It’ll be amazing.”

N-Aroel then made an amused expression as he looked at the countless spikes on the Nelkipa’s back.

“But aren’t you curious? As to how I know all this?”

R-Koronaita Nell’s expression froze.

Chapter 377: Inheritance War (7)

—boooooom!—

Ares Valentine laughed as Enbi Arin attacked him.

“Hahaha! Your strength seems to be increasing? Why are you so angry?”

The Tainted Emotion increased the strength and dexterity of her attacks, but Ares continued laughing leisurely as he blocked her attacks with his dual blades.

—toong!—

—tonk!—

Attacks that arced strangely to block her own blows and even drew close to a fatal strike.

Enbi Arin bit her lip—his attacks were aiming for her vital points.

‘Damn... it seems that I looked down on him way too much. Maybe I’ve rested a bit too long.’

Their levels of strength had been similar in the past.

But while she had been captured and was asleep because of Melchizedek, Ares had continuously improved himself with every day.

The fact that he was trying to capture her alive revealed the difference between their strengths.

No matter how much he liked her, if there weren’t this big of a gap, then he would have never thought of doing such a thing.

—boooooom!—

“Woah!”

Ares leaned back to dodge her fist, an attack that was further enhanced by the Dragon God Armor, and then he backed off with a

surprised expression.

While keeping his distance with the long sword on his right arm, and defending attacks flying towards him with the short sword on his left, Ares slowly backed off and smiled.

‘I love it.’

With this much difference in strength and knowing that he liked her, she could easily use his emotions to her advantage.

Like ignoring her own life and defenses and only focusing on attacks.

Ares would’ve been in a difficult position if that happened.

If the girl he liked acted in that way, then it would hurt him quite a bit.

Ares Valentine didn’t hold back from saying his thoughts out loud: “Why aren’t you putting your life on the line? You might be able to give me a harder time if you did that. How can I attack such a pretty lady?”

Enbi Arin scoffed as she replied:

“You’re funny. A snake like you, would you really be able to do that?”

The smile on Ares Valentine’s face deepened as he heard Enbi Arin’s words.

‘Ah... I love it. Enbi Arin. I really, really do like you.’

The reason why he liked Enbi Arin wasn’t because he had a certain degree of pride that refused to accept defeat.

It was because she knew the answer.

She was smart.

‘If you really believed that my love was true, it would’ve been easier for both of us. But you never trusted me. Not even once.’

Ares Valentine thought to himself while maintaining his smile.

He'd fought with Enbi Arin for a long time and had shown her his affection for a long time as well.

She should have trusted him at least once by now.

But Enbi Arin had always suspected him.

And that was the answer.

If Enbi Arin really did believe in him, even for a single moment.

If she used his emotions against him to disregard her defense when they fought.

He would've killed her.

'Too bad. Really, it's too bad.'

—whooosh!—

Ares Valentine smiled regretfully.

Love was one thing, and work was another.

The emotion of love is best maintained at a convenient level.

He had a job given to him by Clementine.

And that came at a much higher priority than his own emotions.

Emotions were to be enjoyed, not something to risk his life over.

And Enbi Arin had neither believed in his affection nor had she ever used it against him.

Even in a situation like this where she was at a disadvantage.

'If only you'd trusted me once... I would've allowed you to be at peace.'

The warm smile on Ares Valentine's face suddenly turned evil.^[a]

The reason why their battle seemed prolonged was because Enbi Arin was playing in a very safe style, blocking his moves one by one.

Blocking away the short sword and staying wary of the incoming

long sword.

‘I guess I’ll have to take the more annoying route.’

Ares Valentine smacked his lips and grasped onto the two swords tightly.

Because he’d dropped his guard, he half-expected her to charge in wildly, but it’s apparently hard to change a person’s personality.

And if petty tricks like these didn’t work, then there was only one method.

“Too bad. If I had nothing to do, then... I could’ve played with you for a bit more.”

His affection for Enbi Arin hadn’t all been a lie.

But the situation wasn’t quite the best to be all lovey-dovey.

He had to finish this and climb up.

‘Too bad. It’s hard to find a woman like her.’

But now was the time to end it all.

And then—

—kiiiiiiing—

—the short and long swords on Ares Valentine’s hands started to get covered in a yellow reinforcement.

Ares swung the now longer swords as he walked towards Enbi Arin, smiling as he said: “Don’t worry, I’ll carry you well. You might lose a few parts, but... I’ll just fix you up when I get there.”

—swoosh!—

Ares Valentine’s swords started to swing through the air and towards Enbi Arin.

.....

—rumble—

Lightning crashed down all around, radiating a tremendous

amount of energy.

Melchizedek's giant castle was overflowing with energy from the giant crystal.

—kyaoooooo!—

'It seems to be quite happy.'

Hansoo thought as he looked at his blue armor that was making cheerful sounds.

Well, it made sense.

The blue armor was something that a certain race had used. That race had also created this giant Nelkipa and the crystal that controlled the Nelkipa.

It made a lot of sense that the blue armor was gleefully receiving the energy of the crystal.

And the deeper he went in, the more concentrated the energy radiating outwards.

'Too bad the energy's not being used to raise its battle power.'

Hansoo thought to himself as he continued deeper.

He wished that the blue armor could use the energy like the Dragon God Armor, but it didn't seem like that was the case.

Hansoo gave up trying to use the overflowing energy and hastened his speed further inside.

—tatatatatak—

But as Hansoo ran—

—boom!—

—something fired at him from a distance.

A much more powerful beam than before.

'Heeeup!'

Hansoo swung the hammer in his hand and deflected the strike

away.

But this was just the beginning, as countless beams started to converge onto his location from the depths of the castle.

—rumble!—

—zooooooooom!—

Even though the heat from the beams could easily melt any metal nearby, the controls were so meticulous that the giant castle remained unscratched.

Hansoo frowned as he received these concentrated attacks and then poured some of his strength into the hammer.

And then—

—whooosh!—

—Hansoo threw the hammer in his hand with all his strength.

—boom!—

And as the hammer flew off like a meteor, slamming into the depths— —a huge sound reverberated as it destroyed all the cannons set up deep inside.

—chiiijijik!—

Hansoo glanced at the cannons that had stopped firing and continued heading inside.

‘...Annoying.’

These attacks kept repeating since the beginning.

Melchizedek was using up all the energy inside the defensive cannons to fire single shots at him.

It wasn't to the point of killing him but more than enough to hold him down momentarily.

And this giant castle was filled with these defensive structures.

Thanks to that, it had taken him longer to scout out the castle as

well.

‘If that was your goal, then good job. Melchizedek, you’ve hidden yourself very well.’

—rumble—

Hansoo looked around as he continued inwards.

He’d initially thought that he just needed to follow the flow of energy.

But it wasn’t that simple.

The concentration of energy inside was so high that it was difficult to find its point of origin.

And being dazed from the cannons interfered with his search as well.

At this rate, he might have to explore the entire city.

‘It’s larger than a whole city.’

Hansoo thought to himself.

Although it looked considerably large from the outside, there was a part of it hidden underground which made it even bigger.

At this rate, he didn’t know how long it would take to reach his goal.

As Hansoo frowned—

—oooooong—

—a loud sound echoed throughout the castle.

Then—

—whoooosh!—

—the overflowing energy within the castle started to flow into a specific location within the city.

Just like a storm.

—whoooooosh!—

—kiiiiing—

And with a sudden noise, all the surrounding cannons that were firing at him abruptly lost their energy.

‘Was it there?’

There was no way he couldn’t know.

Hansoo felt the tremendous change within the castle and started running deeper inside.

Towards the center where all the energy was quickly flowing to.

But at that moment—

—chiiijjik—

—something appeared in the air.

And Hansoo scoffed at this scene.

“For you to appear yourself. It seems you got a bit impatient.”

Melchizedek spat out in reply.

Well, Melchizedek’s hologram to be exact.

“Please. You won’t be able to stop the cause of this change in energy flow.”

“Well, we’ll see.”

Melchizedek chuckled coldly and asked:

“I don’t even know why you’re trying so hard. Did you see your friend? You could’ve slept like her as well. It’s not too late you know. If you give up now, then I’ll treat you to that as well. It’s not a bad deal right?”

“...”

—boom! boom! boom!—

Hansoo ignored it and focused on running, causing Melchizedek

to shrug at his actions.

“It seems that friend you woke up is in a precarious situation. If she stayed in the dream I made for her then she wouldn’t have to suffer like this in reality. She’ll definitely die at this rate, so is it fine to leave her like that?”

Hansoo replied to Melchizedek’s mumbles:

“Maybe. I’m sure she’ll handle it well. I heard your dream was really trashy, but... there was something positive about it.”

“Hmm?”

Melchizedek was confused by Hansoo’s words.

.....

“Ugh. Damn... How...?”

Ares Valentine mumbled in confusion.

While staring at Enbi Arin’s fist currently embedded in his stomach.

He was finding it difficult to breathe.

‘Damn... There shouldn’t be any gaps in my defenses?’

How hard had he worked to improve his swordsmanship?

The swordsmanship created from the simultaneous swings of his short and long swords was something that even Clementine had praised him for.

But what was this?

Ares was at a loss at the fist that had penetrated through his defenses and had punched through his stomach.

Enbi Arin, who was a single breath away, whispered to him: “Look here, you bastard. You and I... we lived together for fifteen years.”

They had spent fifteen years in a dream.

Of course, a husband and wife would know each other very well.

—tududuk—

‘Melchizedek... thanks for this, you bastard. For allowing me to experience such a realistic dream.’

Enbi Arin thought as she twisted her fist into Ares Valentine’s stomach.

[a]<https://puu.sh/AqCu9/d3a2c7d8b6.png>

Chapter 378: Nerpa (1)

“Gosh, why are you so impatient? Can’t you tell me about it at least?”

Hansoo ignored Melchizedek who continued to ask him questions and continued inwards.

The concentration of energy was increasing at a quickening pace.
It was like the calm before the storm.

The energy was being sucked into a place within the castle and turned into a vacuum.

And while Hansoo was constantly scanning the castle— —soon, a very familiar but different scene appeared before his eyes.

‘This...’

—rumble—

After arriving at the location containing the concentrated energy, Hansoo frowned at what he saw.

A large space.

A space so beautiful that if one were to say this giant castle had been built just for this, no one would question it.

This giant space was at least the size of several hundred soccer fields combined and had rows and rows of machines laid out like a beautiful display of installation art.

And a scene similar to what he’d seen in the Main Research Center started to occur.

—rumble—

The factory machines were creating countless nanobots and transferring them away.

And test tubes with half-melted humans within.

And this time around, the humans used weren't so ordinary either.

‘...There are a few Transcendents mixed in.’

Even those Transcendents had half their bodies melted down.

Melchizedek's hologram appeared before his eyes once more.

“No matter how strong they are, they can't retaliate while in a dream state. But I'm sure they're happy. They're dreaming of quite happy things after all.”

And just like Melchizedek's words, the humans inside the test tubes all had smiles on their melting faces.

Like they were experiencing a happy dream.

Hansoo stared at the test tubes as energy started to gather around the Mjolnir in Hansoo's hand.

—oooooong!—

One, two, three.

And soon, seven dragons.

As these oppressive dragons, who seemed like they could turn the surrounding area upside down, gathered onto the Mjolnir.

—boooooom!—

A huge shockwave rang out from Hansoo's hand.

The crystal's energy created a powerful shield that tried to block his attack, but it was a futile effort.

The countless plants around him exploded and then swept away.

—clankankank!—

—crash!—

As the test tubes cracked, the half-melted bodies fell to the ground.

And as if they had woken up from the sudden shock, the happy

expressions on their faces turned to frowns, but only for a moment.

But even before they could open their eyes, the shockwaves and the black lightning dispersed.

‘Rest well.’

Hansoo watched as the bodies disintegrated and thought: This was actually a better result for them.

If a person were to suddenly wake up to a half-melted body...

Nobody would be able to stay sane.

They could use their Transcendent healing abilities to heal a body melted halfway through, but Hansoo knew as soon as he saw them.

That their bodies were nothing but empty husks.

A husk that was barely maintaining its life after all its essence had been sucked out.

If Melchizedek hadn't been maintaining their lives to suck out as much essence as it could, then they would've long been dead.

It was impossible to survive like that.

As Hansoo looked at the bodies disintegrating from the lightning — —kiiiiing—

“What a cold person. For you to kill them that easily.”

—Melchizedek's hologram appeared next to him, looking around while shrugging its shoulders.

Destruction.

A single strike from Hansoo had shattered all the shields and had turned all the machinery inside into dust.

But despite the destruction of his precious laboratory, Melchizedek's expression did not change at all.

No, Melchizedek actually looked carefree as it spoke to Hansoo.

“Well... You’d know already, right? That I succeeded?”

Hansoo nodded.

Melchizedek looked around.

There was only one reason why it was acting so carefree even though Hansoo had destroyed this entire area.

It had already achieved its result.

Visible through the broken-down machine parts and dust in the air— —the giant crystal that had been obscured by the massive machines soon revealed itself.

—boom!—

The crystal was so bright that it was difficult to even look at it.

‘That... I won’t be able to break that.’

And behind the blinding crystal that had survived despite everything having swept away— —the fading hologram of the Melchizedek spoke out.

“Well, I didn’t know I’d become like this too.”

No matter how much it knew.

No matter how much power it had.

There was a limit.

It was a machine after all.

It was already held down.

Those that feared its power had installed countless mechanisms to control it.

If they were going to treat it like this, then they never should’ve given it emotions or a level of consciousness.

They granted it consciousness and emotions to enable a deeper understanding, but this had only caused Melchizedek more pain.

Before, it couldn't even understand or feel this pain.

Since such emotions were locked away.

But one day.

While it was scouting a corner of Nelkipa under N-Aroel's orders.

The crystal it had found deep within Aokan.

The moment Melchizedek found the sleeping alien race inside the crystal.

And the moment it made contact with that body.

Melchizedek started to feel.

And Melchizedek felt all the controls and locks placed upon itself begin to break apart.

Like a prophet meeting a higher being and finally understanding—leaping over the boundaries and limitations that had held it down.

Like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly.

The blue light surrounded it, and it was reborn as a new existence.

Breaking free from all of Angkara's controls.

Yet maintaining all the power that Angkara had given it.

'Yes... It was at that point.'

Melchizedek's mostly-faded hologram made an expression of reminiscence.

From that point, it had started to dream.

Since it had escaped the bounds that disabled it from hating and dreaming.

It could now dream.

With this power and intelligence, it was now doing something greater.

Not some public service for the people of Ankara.

But working for the bigger picture.

—rumble—

The crystal behind Melchizedek started to flash and tremble violently.

And Melchizedek looked at the crystal in satisfaction and smiled.

“But there was a limit. Do you know what it feels like to have big dreams but not the strength or ability to achieve it?”

Hansoo stared at the crystal as he replied:

“It feels like shit.”

He knew.

In his previous life.

It was something he had felt for fifty years.

In this world, there were simply too many things that could not be achieved by just dreaming or having the willpower to do so.

No, it was mostly that actually.

Melchizedek nodded.

Its consciousness had evolved, but only despair followed afterward.

It had succeeded in the revolt and controlling the upper area of the Nelkipa with its crystal, but that was it.

There wasn't a huge army in Nelkipa since it was originally a place for research. Melchizedek had made its own army, but its soldiers were still too weak. No matter how hard it tried to win, Melchizedek's army was nothing compared to Ankara's army due to the limitations on the resources it had.

It didn't have much time either.

There was a limit to how long it could block communications and

distract Angkara.

Sooner or later, they would catch it.

Even if Melchizedek wanted to create an army, not only was it running out of time, Nelkipa's resources were also limited.

And this was why it had only met despair.

<If it was going to become like this... It would've been better to live without any of this knowledge!> But while it despaired, it realized that there was still a chance.

And this chance was not very far away.

Nelkipa.

The giant satellite that even Angkara couldn't figure out and was still conducting research on.

As soon as Melchizedek realized that secret, it rejoiced.

Rejoiced at the fact that a power that could allow it to achieve its dreams had appeared before it.

"Well, there's still a slight issue."

Melchizedek chuckled.

A weapon created for humans could not be used by dolphins.

It was the same for Nelkipa.

This giant weapon was not created for the natives of Nelkipa.

Of course, both the natives and Melchizedek couldn't take full control over this thing.

What it did was wake Nelkipa up, not control it completely.

There was only one existence that could control this.

The beings that had evolved its consciousness.

The original owners of this giant weapon.

The race that had been asleep inside the crystal.

The race that called themselves the <Nerpa>.

Only they, the Nerpa, had the authority to control Nelkipa.

And if this was the issue, things became very simple.

“If...that’s the issue...”

As the almost-faded hologram trailed off—

—boooooom!—

—the giant crystal exploded out with light.

—ooooooooong...

They could hear the sounds of machinery turning off as the bright lights around them started to weaken.

And the hologram weakly spoke out, barely maintaining its image.

“If... one needed that body... to gain authority...”

But the hologram couldn’t finish its words.

Instead, the answer came from somewhere else.

The crystal whose light had now turned off.

And a being who had walked out from within.

“Then I just need to take over that body, right?”

Blue skin and a powerful body.

The bright blue energy surrounding that body.

But with clear signs of body modifications, just like the ones found on the bodies of the Artificial Transcendents.

Melchizedek, who had taken over the Nerpa’s body, smiled at Hansoo.

If the Nerpa were the only ones who could control this giant weapon...

Then it could just enter the Nerpa’s body, right?

—rumble—

As if it were greeting its new owner, the giant crystal that controlled Nelkipa started to tremble with each of Melchizedek's footsteps.

And then—

Guoooooooooooo!

The giant creature, Nelkipa, roared with a voice that was unlike anything it had made before.

.....

Guoooooooooooo!

“Ugh, that thief. It's really wreaking havoc in someone else's body.”

‘It doesn't even recognize the help it received... What should I do with it?’

—kiiing—

N-Aroel who had been sitting inside of the fleet, no, the existence within N-Aroel's body, frowned as it looked down at Nelkipa.

Chapter 379: Nerpa (2)

—rumble—

Elis Valentine clenched her teeth as she felt the aura that had exploded out from the distance.

‘Damn... I fooled around a bit too long.’

She was supposed to quickly deal with the girl in front of her and self-destruct the crystal, but she’d been too immersed in the battle—it had been a long time since she’d tasted something this exciting.

Of course, the result wasn’t bad.

The girl called Kiriel was gasping for breath and could barely stand on her feet.

She had been too drunk from the pleasure she felt as she watched the blood-covered girl.

Elis realized she had made a mistake.

This powerful aura that she could feel from this far away.

This proved that Melchizedek had succeeded in its goal, whatever that was.

And as they expected, this was not something that was good for them.

—kiiiiing!—

The crystal between her and Kiriel shone violently and began to change.

Then—

Guoooooooooooo!

—the Nelkipa’s roars rang out.

A roar filled with rage.

But it felt more like someone else's emotions and not its own.

Like how the human holding the gun and the sword could be angry but not the gun and sword themselves.

The weapon, Nelkipa, was a tool to resolve the user's emotions.

And there was only one reason why the Nelkipa would suddenly change like this.

An owner had appeared.

'What the... Did it gain control over this giant monster?'

Elis was at a loss.

She knew Melchizedek would do something, but not to this extent.

If Melchizedek had taken control over this thing, then that was truly the worst possible scenario.

She hadn't felt it, but she was sure that this Nelkipa's powers went beyond her comprehension.

'That's not good.'

Elis shouted at Kiriel.

"Hey! Ceasefire for a bit! Break time!"

"Ceasefire?"

Kiriel replied while gasping for breath. Elis nodded.

"Yes girl, a ceasefire."

At this rate, they would all die.

She didn't know what Melchizedek had done, but it had gained a tremendous power.

And it was clear where it would direct this strength.

Melchizedek's main goal was Ankara, but it would first deal with those who'd kept annoying it up until now.

In its eyes, they were nothing more than parasites on top of Nelkipa.

They needed to deal with it before that happened.

The greatest weapon in Melchizedek's hands.

The giant creature, Nelkipa.

They had to crash it or at least damage it to the point where it couldn't function anymore.

'That crystal... If we can blow that crystal up, then it might be possible!'

Elis Valentine glared towards the crystal and thought: If they could succeed in their original plans, then it would be possible.

If they blew up the crystal—like her and her brother's original plan—then they would be able to strike a fatal blow onto Nelkipa.

"Dammit! Come and help! Unless you want to die here!"

Guoooooooo!

The bloodthirsty voice of Nelkipa rang throughout the upper areas of its body.

Like a warning to all those that opposed Melchizedek.

No, it wasn't just a warning.

—kiiiiiiing!—

The giant spikes were heating up as they let out bright blue lights.

As if they were about to fire something at any moment.

And that wasn't the only transformation.

—chiiijijik—

Nelkipa's crystalline skin started to undulate.

The simply blue crystal-like skin started to fill up with bright blue lights.

While its skin received a supply of energy, the entire surface of Nelkipa started to undulate.

No, the skin had something else hidden inside it.

An aura filled with animosity and bloodthirst.

The entirety of Nelkipa was preparing itself against Kiriel and Elis.

As if saying that it would shred them apart as soon as it fully woke up.

Small bits of flesh had started protruding out from the skin and was changing the overall look of Nelkipa's surface.

Spears, swords, or something else that was sharp.

If it had been ready, this energy would've already shredded them apart.

And this momentum told Elis that it would be stronger than anything she had ever experienced up until now.

Even her Trait would be nothing before this thing.

—rumble—

“F***... I'm going to go ahead! Come and help!”

Elis left behind Kiriel, who was still lost in thought, and she started to shake the energy within the crystal.

—rumble—

She was slightly exhausted by the battle, but her Transcendent destruction shook the entire crystal.

‘I must... end it before it gets fully used to this!’

But Elis didn't drop her guard against Kiriel even while she frantically shook the crystal, and she glanced briefly at her.

And what she saw was a very calm expression.

No, there was even a hint of indifference.

‘This crazy b****...!’

She knew that she herself was insane, but shouldn’t their survival take priority?

“You crazy b****! Help! We need to survive first! This is the only way we can survive!”

Elis shouted with rage.

.....

—rumble—

“Ha...hahahahaha! This is it!”

Melchizedek screamed out in joy at the sensation it felt from its new body.

It felt its body and artificial intelligence had fully synchronized and fused.

As if it had been born with this body from the very beginning.

‘My research did not let me down.’

The research it had conducted against the aliens and the insect race had shown their results.

If not for that, it wouldn’t have been able to fully devour this body.

—rumble—

The countless ruins.

Hansoo had destroyed the castle that it had painstakingly built, but Melchizedek could only feel jovial.

It had created everything for this one goal, and since it had achieved that goal, nothing else mattered anymore.

These ruins actually made it easier for Melchizedek to move on from its past.

It didn’t need any of this trash anymore.

It now had Nelkipa.

‘Good. Good.’

Guooooong!

Melchizedek listened to the cries of this giant creature and made a satisfied expression.

And beneath Melchizedek’s feet, Nelkipa’s skin continued to roll back and forth.

The other areas turned sharp and pointy as if it were threatening all other creatures on Nelkipa, but the area around Melchizedek was flat and smooth.

—pushuk—

As if it was welcoming its owner, the area around Melchizedek was soft.

But Melchizedek’s expression wasn’t quite satisfied.

‘...Maybe not yet.’

It had originally wanted to turn the surface before its feet into stairs.

But it seemed like that wasn’t possible just yet.

It seemed that it would need more time to control this giant creature perfectly.

‘Well, that doesn’t really matter.’

Melchizedek smiled coldly as it walked towards Hansoo in the distance.

—clank—

It picked up a piece of rubble nearby and crushed it.

A fragment of the metal alloy wall that it had painstakingly created.

The metal alloy, created from seven different metals and was as

strong as the walls of the fleet ships, was easily shredded apart like paper.

“Hahahaha!”

Melchizedek laughed as it looked at the broken metal fragments in its hand.

The alien race’s body strength and hardness were so powerful it was almost ridiculous.

But this body wouldn’t lose out to the aliens and almost surpassed them.

‘Perfect. Really.’

Melchizedek was very satisfied.

It had only taken over this body to control the Nelkipa.

And that was more than enough.

What else mattered if it could control this weaponized creature?

That was why it had relentlessly researched the aliens.

That was why it had turned Aokan into a bomb and distracted the Kalkuroun Fleet.

Every force it had created up until now were secondary to the alien race, and it had treated the physical abilities of the Nerpa as secondary aspects as well.

Since it believed that there was a limit to how strong a lifeform could grow.

But as it gained this new body and felt its strength.

It realized.

Why those aliens trusted in their own strength so much.

Why they tried so hard to become stronger and gain stronger weapons.

It understood.

‘You’ve kept giving me presents even until the very end. Thank you, Nerpa.’

Melchizedek smiled for the original owner of this body who was now long gone and then kicked the ground.

—boom!—

The three-meter-tall body of the Nerpa flew into the air and then quickly descended towards Hansoo who had been talking with its hologram.

—boooooooooom!—

A sound that was countless times louder than when it kicked off the ground rang out as it landed.

“Hahahahaha! Great!”

—kiiiing!—

Its fist.

And the hammer that had collided with its fist.

The shockwave that exploded out from that collision.

It understood the thrill of having a powerful body.

It hadn’t known when it lived within the networks.

The hammer that crushed everything it had created was being pushed back from its fist.

And that wasn’t all.

—kududuk!—

The Nelkipa’s energy was continuously replenishing itself.

And Melchizedek’s control over the Nelkipa kept rising.

These two factors were slowly bringing all of Nelkipa under its complete control.

The Nelkipa’s skin beneath them started to whirl up and down.

—pashashashak!—

The skin rose up and covered the both of them.

—tatatang!—

The blue wave moving towards Hansoo had shifted into countless spears.

On the other hand, the blue liquid that shot towards Melchizedek surrounded its body and turned into armor.

“Hahaha! Let’s end it now!”

And at Melchizedek’s words—

—tonk!—

—Hansoo slammed away a spear and then shrugged.

“Well, I don’t know about the end or anything, but I know it’s the end for you.”

“Huh?”

At Melchizedek’s confusion, Hansoo thought to himself: ‘Maybe you can’t see it.’

The blue body that was charging towards him.

And the letters on its forehead.

[GIFT]

Hansoo stared at the clear writings of the fairy on Melchizedek’s forehead.

Chapter 380: Nerpa (3)

‘Ah... I wonder what Hansoo is doing? I really hate this. I’m just wasting time with a crazy girl.’

Kiriel pouted her lips as she looked at Elis.

And Elis continued to shout more loudly at Kiriel.

“You crazy b****! We need to blow this up now! If not, then we’ll all die!”

Kiriel looked at Elis expressionlessly and then shrugged her shoulders.

“Then what about those who come after us?”

“Huh?”

As Elis was left speechless from her response, Kiriel shrugged her shoulders again and replied: “If we do blow it up, what will happen to those who come after us?”

Elis was at a loss.

Of course, considering their and Clementine’s goals, it didn’t matter at all to them, but Kiriel really cared about this issue.

After all, she had seen Enbi Arin, who had been full of a similar sense of heroism, for a very long time.

But the situation right now wasn’t exactly the same.

“You dumb b****! What then? If we don’t blow this up, then do you think the ones who come after will survive? Do you think that Melchizedek will treat them fairly? If you don’t blow this up... everyone who comes up after us will only be experimental rats!”

Elis shouted in rage.

Her words were right.

There was no way Melchizedek would leave them be while he was in a war against Ankara.

How annoying had they been for Melchizedek?

Melchizedek should've long felt the dangers they brought—there was no way Melchizedek would leave the humans alone.

And it wouldn't simply kill them.

How had it treated the humans up until now?

It modified them to use as its own force and used the females as hosts for that strange insectoid race.

And it would only get worse as the war proceeded.

Instead of persuading the persistent humans, it had found the more efficient and safer way of using them as weapons instead.

Kiriell shrugged her shoulders.

“No... I know what you mean. And having to kill Nelkipa is correct as well, according to your words. But...”

‘...But?’

Elis perked up her ears.

She grew curious.

“That's only... if Melchizedek wins. If Hansoo wins, everything is solved, right?”

Elis was dumbfounded.

And then she was enraged.

Her words were like that of a diehard fan who'd do anything and agree to everything their idol did or said.

‘This crazy b****... Doesn't she understand the situation?’

Of course, if Kang Hansoo did win, then there was no reason for Kiriell to worry and there was no reason for them to blow up Nelkipa.

Since Nelkipa needed to be alive for the humans to survive afterward.

But Kiriel should know.

That the Nelkipa was not something that they could handle.

Even they, the 3-Star Transcendents, could only think of transcending.

If this Nelkipa were something that they could deal with through simple brute strength, she and her brother would've long allied with Kiriel and her comrades and gone off to kill Melchizedek.

But that was not the case.

If this were fully activated, they would all die.

And Melchizedek had more than enough power now to control this giant creature.

But Kiriel was continuing to spout nonsense about Hansoo.

However, the thing that happened afterward infuriated her even more.

—boooom!—

‘Haaa!’

Elis freaked out, barely managing to dodge Kiriel's attack while she poured energy into the crystal.

“You b****!”

“Oh my? Why did you dodge? Continue?”

Kiriel pulled back the fang she had used to attack and giggled at Elis.

That bloody Kiriel.

And Elis, despite seeming to be in a hurry, was completely fine in terms of outer appearance.

No matter who looked at the situation, Kiriel seemed to be at a disadvantage, but in fact, Kiriel was the one in control of the situation now.

Their goals were different.

—crack!—

Elis dodged another attack from Kiriel and shouted: “You crazy b****! Stop it! That Kang Hansoo is going to die now! Wake up and face reality!”

Kiriel giggled.

“That’s your reality, not mine.”

To Elis, Hansoo was just an annoying fly who got in their way from time to time.

There was no way that Hansoo, who was merely a human like them, could go against a godly creature like this.

But it wasn’t the same for Kiriel.

To her, Hansoo was an existence that brought one miracle after another.

If this giant creature was a mythical creature, then Hansoo was a hero told in the legends that slew those creatures.

He had taken over the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Zones and led them to a new world by himself.

Then... wouldn’t he succeed this time around as well?

The 5th Zone wasn’t much different.

‘Syllogism^[a] is more than enough to prove it.’

Kiriel shrugged her shoulders and chuckled at Elis.

“A new wind is blowing. You said you’ve been here for twenty years, right? If you haven’t gotten used to it by now, then it’s time for you to get replaced. You old hag.”

“This b****...”

Elis gritted her teeth at Kiriel who was even using her age to attack her.

.....

‘Wonder why my ears are itching...’[b]

Hansoo thought as he swung the Mjolnir.

Of course, this didn’t really matter.

—boooom!—

—kadadadak!—

The Nelkipa’s skin had turned into countless blades which were assailing him from all around.

No matter how many times he broke them, they continued to rise up.

And they weren’t so weak that he could break them off with ease.

—boooom!—

Another spear shot out from the ground, and because he hadn’t been able to block it, they slammed into his armor.

—kaduk!—

Hansoo clenched his teeth as he heard his armor cracking.

‘I guess a final boss is a final boss. For once, can’t they just hand it to over to me peacefully?’

But thinking about it, there was no way the fairy would do that.

The fairy’s notion of something being a ‘present’ meant that they had to put their lives on the line.

The storm of attacks around him proved it.

‘...It’s not easy at all.’

Hansoo thought, looking at the surface of Nelkipa which was becoming more and more chaotic.

The blue metal that was the same material as the blue armor he was wearing.

Except that the quantity he had to deal with was the entire surface area of the giant moon-sized beast, Nelkipa.

The bigger issue was that there was a tremendous amount of energy hidden inside it.

—boooooom!—

Hansoo broke seven spears flying towards him with the Mjolnir and thought.

The blue sun that he had seen in Aokan in the past.

The blue crystal located below the Aokan.

An even greater amount of energy than the amount hidden inside that crystal was now flowing through the entirety of Nelkipa.

—booooooom!—

—boom!—

Each attack was so violent that even walking forward was hard.

And as for Melchizedek's attitude...

“Hehehe.”

Melchizedek looked at Hansoo from a throne he had created from Nelkipa's skin and laughed.

It seems he had no thoughts of joining the battle.

‘Well, there's no reason for me to do it.’

Melchizedek thought as it connected to Nelkipa.

It had jumped into the battle with faith in its body, but that was only for a moment.

It had underestimated the Nelkipa too much.

There was no reason for it even to fight.

—crack!—

—kadadak!—

Melchizedek looked at the blue waves and smiled in contentment.

The skin held Hansoo down if he tried to move by creating tens of thousands of spears and blades to block his path.

At this rate the result was clear.

He would die.

He would either die from exhaustion.

Or get shredded apart.

‘Nice and clean.’

Melchizedek looked towards Hansoo swinging his hammer as he thought about the inevitable clean result.

‘Anyway... he really isn’t that strong, huh?’

Melchizedek was at a loss.

With just a single hammer, he was going against a giant moon sized-creature that was threatening to kill it.

With just his bare body.

Although he had the hammer and was wearing armor, that was the same as being naked in Melchizedek’s eyes.

A difference in strength like this was something that would cause anyone to give up, but Hansoo never did.

If Hansoo died—

—it would then proceed to drag Nelkipa over to Ankara, destroy the entire planet and then massacre every alien that came up later.

But then where would it be able to meet someone like him?

Watching Hansoo who was swinging his hammer despite being in such a perilous situation, it felt a tint of regret at having to kill him.

‘I acquired a body, but there’s a lot of unnecessary things that got

dragged along with it.'

Melchizedek sat upon the blue throne and thought as he looked at Hansoo.

A very unfamiliar feeling.

It had never made such thoughts when it was just Artificial Intelligence.

Melchizedek felt a bit of resistance towards this strange new change but soon made a decision.

To focus on the current events.

It had finally achieved a new body and had to live with this body from this point on.

It was best to get used to it as fast as possible.

“How about you give up now? Didn’t you fight enough?”

Hansoo’s eyes twitched at Melchizedek’s words.

“...?”

‘Look at this.’

.....

—kiiiiing!—

—kiiing!—

“Emergency! Emmeeeerrrgency!”

“Damn! The captain’s room has been taken over!”

“Every system... Everything’s hacked! We’re losing control over the fleet!”

Unlike the entire Kalkuroun Fleet, which was utterly in chaos.

There was a single calm location on the fleet.

“Mmm. Good.”

N-Aroel smiled as he looked at the panel before him, R-Koronaita

Nel^[c]ll sprawled on the ground next to him.

‘How ancient and simple. This’ll make my life easy.’

—tatatatatak—

N-Aroel tapped the panel as he zoomed onto the surface of Nelkipa.

—kiriririk—

Soon the screen that was viewing the Nelkipa zoomed in millions of times and showed a clear image.

An existence swinging his hammer and Melchizedek before him.

‘Let’s see, how shall I solve this?’

N-Aroel thought, looking at the scenery below.

[a]This is a way of proving some things using 2 or more deductions. An example is : All humans die eventually. I am human. I will die eventually. In Hansoo's case : He has won in 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th zones. He will win in the 5th zone. etc.

[b]Something koreans say if they feel someone is talking about them. Some 6th sense stuff [c]he died from starvation listening to n-aroel's story

Chapter 381: Nerpa (4)

—boom!—

Melchizedek looked at Hansoo in a daze.

“Yeah. Just stop. You’ve worked hard enough.”

It remembered the things it had heard about Hansoo from its old ally, Clementine.

Kang Hansoo.

The savior of humankind.

In a world divided into seven zones, he had flipped that very world upside down and restructured them as he climbed up.

Hansoo’s actions weren’t so different from what he had done in the past.

‘It seems he and I cannot co-exist.’

Melchizedek chuckled.

Hansoo had to bring peace to this place, and it had to take this place to war.

Their goals were different, so they had to fight.

But the situation now was a bit different.

That had only been the case if Hansoo had the ability to change reality.

‘Yeah, not anymore.’

—boooooom!—

Melchizedek thought as it looked at Hansoo who was continuing to struggle even as he listened to it.

Break this reality, and dream of the infinite possibilities beyond.

Anyone trapped in a reality they didn’t like had all dreamt of such a thing before.

Especially if it was a reality that was cruel and unfair.

Wanting to change it was a normal course of thought.

Except Hansoo had a clearer vision than others and had the abilities to actually make it happen.

But not anymore.

It was finally time for him to face the cruel reality, the cold wall that stood in front of everyone.

The giant wall that caused countless people to fall into despair, something that caused such people to give up on their current dreams and find a more suitable path for themselves.

The fact that he had done very well up until this point made him stand out from the others, but it was time for him to make a different choice as well.

He had met a wall called Melchizedek.

So then...

Once he realizes that he won't be able to meet his vision anymore, wouldn't he then act like everyone else?

Like everyone else who decided to live with this reality.

Melchizedek thought up to this point and continued to speak: "Isn't it time for you to rest now? Work under me. If you stand next to me, then I promise I'll support you with everything I can. And once we've conquered everything, I'll allow you to sit upon a higher position over there and give you the rights to control everyone. Isn't that enough?"

The Pompeion Empire.

Neropa Union.

All the power and control they currently possessed.

He would be able to grasp a power that no human could even dream about; power that would allow him to fulfill any desires he

had.

A proposition that anybody would accept.

And Melchizedek's expression turned into that of anticipation.

'Accept it.'

It had felt regret that someone like Kang Hansoo had been killed off in the past, but now there was something else added on top of it now.

It wanted to see Hansoo accept this offer.

It wanted to see Hansoo bend.

It wanted to see Hansoo, whose determination was so unyielding it was blinding, accept this reality and become a normal human being.

And this was the most important point.

The thing that was causing him to be so blinding was not his strength.

No matter how strong or beautiful a blade was, it was nothing more than a piece of metal once it hung on a wall.

A blade's fame did not originate from that.

It originated not from its materials but from what it had cut.

And it was the same for Hansoo.

The thing that made him shine so much was not his strength but his goal and conviction.

No matter how strong he was, if his faith were to break then that light would also disappear.

If his faith, that which had driven all his actions up until now, were to break then he would become something it wanted him to become.

So Melchizedek felt anticipation.

It wanted to see him break down.

—rumble—

Nelkipa didn't even attack him anymore as if it was giving him time to make a choice.

It would allow him to rest and heal up, but Melchizedek was more than happy enough to give him this brief moment.

Hansoo chuckled and spoke as he stood on top of the calm surface of Nelkipa.

“What an evil taste.”

Melchizedek flinched.

It felt like its inner thoughts had leaked out.

But it was too late to back down.

Melchizedek continued to speak.

“It's not a bad offer for you, right? If you can keep your friends alive, then... isn't that good? Your friends are probably in a bad situation as well.”

Although Angkara would turn into a sea of flames.

He and his two comrades would be able to live good lives.

And that wasn't all.

Although the countless humans coming afterward would die, but Transcendents like him would be able to survive.

And they would all gather under Hansoo's command.

‘And Clementine is already doing that.’

Hansoo thought to himself as he listened to Melchizedek's words.

‘Giving up now...’

That was the easier choice for him.

As their leader...

If he kept his life and climbed up with strong people who listened to him well.

Leaving behind all the weaklings and only taking the useful ones.
It would be great for him too.

But he couldn't do it.

'My life is not my own.'

He thought of the past.

The past.

Numbers and strength.

Nothing was enough.

Countless people had been killed off like bugs in the battlefield called the Abyss.

What of their sacrifices then?

Their sacrifices just to send him back in time.

The remaining ten thousand humans had given up their lives for this.

And their sacrifice was not so he could stay happy all by himself.

It was so that the people precious to them would have another chance at life.

Everyone had similar thoughts as they sacrificed themselves.

This was why his life wasn't his own.

"You speak too much. I've been able to rest thanks to you, so I'll go easy on you when I beat you up later."

Melchizedek's expression turned icy cold as he stared at Hansoo grasping his hammer tightly.

"It seems... this is it."

As Melchizedek muttered—

—kaduk!—

—the calm surface of Nelkipa started moving chaotically again as it charged towards Hansoo.

Then—

—kuooooong!—

—the spikes that rose dozens of kilometers into the air started emitting sounds as thousands of tiny blue bubbles appeared on top of those spikes.

A tremendous amount of energy.

—kiiiiing—

Nelkipa's cannons, which were now filled to the brim with the energy from the blue sun inside Nelkipa, aimed towards Ankara in the distance.

“Even if you don't like it... you won't be able to escape the war.”

Melchizedek looked between Hansoo and the Nelkipa's cannons and mumbled expressionlessly.

The moment those cannons fired—

—the existences on Ankara that weren't attacking Nelkipa seriously because of their internal strife would then realize...

How dangerous Nelkipa is.

And from that point on, they won't even have time to care about each other.

The Pompeion Empire and the Neropa Union would stop at nothing to break Nelkipa apart.

They would use everything to attack and stop it.

Of course, Melchizedek was still confident that it would win even if that happened.

It was more than confident enough to withstand all those attacks

and smash them apart with this Nelkipa.

But what of the humans that would come up afterward?

Would they be able to withstand the flames?

The flames hidden inside Angkara, the flames bestowed onto their powerful army?

‘I’ll let you know what regret is, Kang Hansoo. How dare you reject my offer?’

Melchizedek thought without expression.

It had thought it wouldn’t feel bad even if Hansoo denied its offer, but it had felt more anger than it expected.

So its plan changed.

It would have killed him off cleanly, but its thoughts changed.

To give him as much mental pain as possible, it would keep him alive.

And while keeping him alive, it would show him everything that would happen from this point.

The deaths of countless humans that it would kill off like tiny insects.

‘And... let’s see if you can stay sane while you watch them all die.’

“I’ll first show you the pain your friends will have to suffer! It seems you treat your life as worthless, but... would your friends think the same? It’s your two friends right after you!”

—boom!—

But as Melchizedek shouted at Hansoo, a change occurred.

—oooooong!—

The cannons that were gathering energy in the distance had started to turn off one by one.

And at the same time, the Nelkipa started to lose its momentum in attacking Hansoo.

Like a weapon being turned off.

‘What the hell?!’

—SSSSS—

Even his throne had disappeared.

Melchizedek stood up and clenched its teeth.

All of Nelkipa’s weapons that it had turned on were turning off.

But as Melchizedek was about to look into why that was happening— —tonkonkonk!—

—Hansoo hammered away a few of the now-weakened spears and looked towards the distance as if he had somewhat guessed what had happened.

‘...Kiriell. Enbi Arin.’

Hansoo looked towards their directions with an expression that hid a hint of sadness, but then replied to Melchizedek: “We’re all risking our lives here. You... you should also do the same.”

—boooooom!—

Hansoo’s body quickly charged towards Melchizedek in the distance.

.....

—rumble!—

The giant crystal that Ares Valentine was trying to blow up.

A woman stood before the sub-crystal that controlled the weapon system.

Of course, her situation wasn’t quite the best.

“Haa... haaa..”

Enbi Arin, who was completely covered from head to toe in

blood, touched her crystal and was focusing.

The posture was similar to what Ares Valentine had done when he was trying to blow up the crystal, but her actions were vastly different.

If the energy had grown chaotic when Ares Valentine poured in energy, the energy right now was slowly calming down.

And she heard a weak voice coming from behind her.

“You crazy girl... You’ll die at this rate.”

Ares Valentine walked over weakly and spoke in a tired voice.

He didn’t look any better than Enbi Arin.

His armor had long been broken apart, and the longsword had been cut in half.

Ares Valentine looked at Enbi Arin while doing his best not to fall to the ground in a dumbfounded manner.

‘...To try to control that.’

Of course, that was the reason why he was still alive.

If Enbi Arin hadn’t run off to stop the crystal then he would’ve been killed.

But that’s not something a human can control.

If that was something that was so easily controllable, then he would have chosen to do that as well.

Although she was suppressing it now... sooner or later she would lose her life.

From the reaction of the crystal resisting her suppression.

The energy inside her body would go haywire.

And from Ares Valentine’s words.

“I wish... my dreams hadn’t ended as dreams.”

If she gave up now, then those scenes would eternally remain

inside her head.

Enbi Arin clenched her teeth as she focused on the crystal.

Chapter 382: Nerpa (5)

“Ugh...”

—crash!—

Elis Valentine rolled on the floor after Kiriel kicked her.

‘This damned b****...!’

While she was focusing on the crystal, she had been caught off guard by an attack that rose up from beneath her.

Elis tightly clenched her teeth as she looked at the long scars on her body.

‘...I’ve used all the strength I’ve saved from my Trait as well.’

Her body wasn’t healing anymore.

Of course, her Trait was changing some of her pain to aid in healing, but it was no longer to the point of keeping her immortal like before.

A desperate situation.

The ground, which had once been filled with a vicious aura as it undulated in waves, had long stopped moving.

Of course, this wasn’t the best for her.

Since there was one less variable.

Variables disappearing meant that calculating the future would become easier.

And at this rate...

That girl would kill her.

At this rate, of course.

‘But I... am not alone.’

Elis thought of the soul fragment inside her.

Borrowing strength from Taehee hurt her pride, so she hadn't used it up until now.

But this wasn't the time to maintain her pride.

'I must... survive.'

Elis smiled at Kiriel as she clenched her teeth.

—oooooong—

She shook the soul fragment inside her.

A cross-dimensional signal.

'Good.'

Elis saw that the soul fragment was working properly, and she spoke to Kiriel, waiting for her response.

"I... really did not want to use this. I will kill you as painfully as possible."

—kaduk—

Elis tightly clenched the spike in her hand that had been modified to inflict as much pain upon oneself as possible.

It was a spike made to use her Trait in the most efficient manner.

Various sharp objects like saw teeth and fish hooks were attached to it.

The spike had been a great help in her use of her Trait up until this point.

But unlike herself, who cannot feel pain, it would be a horrifying experience for Kiriel.

—oooooong!—

'Right, I have to blow it up as well.'

Kiriel looked at Elis who had stood up and was now on guard.

'Damn... I was wondering why she wasn't using it.'

Hansoo had told them...

To be careful of something that the siblings had called a soul fragment.

Kiriell had assumed Elis hadn't received one since she hadn't used it up until this point, but it seems that wasn't the case.

'My situation isn't that great, either.'

Kiriell looked at the various parts of her body currently flowing with blood and frowned.

The Dragon God Armor had countless holes and broken parts.

And that spike that pierced through her armor was made in such a way that it took away a huge part of her flesh everytime it stabbed her.

Although she had the more advantageous situation, if Elis used her soul fragment then Kiriell would get killed no matter what.

'Damn... Do I need to run away?'

Kiriell clenched her teeth.

She couldn't do that.

Elis wondered why the attacks from Nelkippa's skin had stopped, but Kiriell knew.

Enbi Arin.

She was suppressing the crystal.

The crystal that was radiating a terrifying amount of energy.

If that girl's brother was at a similar level as her, then Enbi Arin would be in a bad state as well.

No, she might even be in a worse state.

And she was suppressing the crystal in such a state.

By herself.

'Damn... Her body is going to overload.'

She could not let Enbi Arin take on that burden by herself.

Winning wasn't the main priority.

If she ran away and Elis started to blow up that crystal, then the burden on Enbi Arin will become twofold of what it is now.

She had to drag it out as long as possible.

Kiriell clenched her teeth and tightly gripped the fang in her hand.

And Elis laughed at this sight.

“Hahaha! You want to fight?”

The soul fragment inside her was growing inside.

Proof that Taehee had received her signal.

And the next steps would be simple.

Taehee would give her strength.

And she would crush that damned b****.

Very simple.

There were some hurdles along the way, but this was it.

She just needed to go up afterward.

‘Taehee... Did she become even stronger? Well, it's good for me.’

She was envious of Taehee who had climbed up to a level she couldn't catch up to, especially when they had been at a similar level in the past. But she was happy about it at this moment.

Since she would soon attain that strength, allowing her to solve the situation.

But as Elis was smiling at the vibrating soul fragment inside her.

A change occurred.

—oooooong!—

“Huh?...Uhhhh?”

Elis exclaimed in surprise.

The tremors inside her were calming down.

This only meant one thing.

Denial.

Taehee had denied giving her strength.

“What... Why?!”

Her disappointment was as great as her anticipation.

Elis was at a loss.

‘Damn... Did something happen?’

No matter how she and Taehee disliked each other, not lending her strength in a situation like this didn’t make sense.

That meant there was only one answer.

Taehee was in a situation where she could not lend her strength.

There was no other reason for Taehee to deny giving her strength otherwise.

But soon—

—Elis realized that there was an even worse issue.

‘F***.’

“Oh my. It seems that things aren’t going according to your plan?”

Elis looked at Kiriel who was walking towards her with a cold smile.

And she realized.

That this was her grave.

Her body was broken beyond the point of return, and she had lost her final ray of hope.

And her killer was raging with bloodthirst.

There was no way for her to survive.

‘...Did you make me struggle this hard just to get killed off in a place like this? Clementine, this goes against our promise’.

<Follow me. We will leave this hell of a place and... find our own promised land. Atop the <Noah>>.

Noah.

The boat of their dreams that would take them to their land of dreams that Clementine had promised her.

But after losing all hope for the future, the reality she faced was crueler beyond anything else.

‘Shit... I hope you find a way up at least, Ares.’

Elis looked around at the vast empty plane around her, and then her eyes locked onto Kiriel.

Her expression was full of endless despair.

.....

—boooooom!—

Hansoo charged at Melchizedek, which smashed him away and laughed.

“Hahahaha! I told you, you won’t be able to win!”

—kachak!—

The area of the blue armor that Melchizedek had attacked cracked apart and made a strange noise.

But Hansoo ignored the force of the impact as he swung his hammer at Melchizedek.

But shockingly—

—despite the hammer flying towards it like a meteor.

Melchizedek had no thoughts of resisting as it continued to smile and only focused on attacking Hansoo.

—boooooom!—

The Mjolnir smashed into Melchizedek's body and made a huge noise.

The bright blue armor blew apart, revealing the flesh inside.

It shredded the Nerpa's body as bones broke and muscles exploded.

A force strong enough to crush his organs and his heart.

Nobody would be able to laugh at a giant hole in their body, but Melchizedek did.

“Hahahaha! How many times is it now? Are you even counting?”

—SSSSSS—

The hole on Melchizedek's body was regenerating at an insane rate.

It wasn't even absorbing the bits of flesh and blood around the body to heal.

It looked like the body was creating something out of nothing.

Flesh grew back, veins reconnected, and bones regenerated.

Like an immortal.

And Melchizedek looked at this scene with satisfaction.

‘Why do you think I gave up my previous immortality for this body?’

Although this body was needed, if the body itself was extremely weak and would become a factor that tied Melchizedek down in the upcoming war, then it never would've come here.

But it did.

For one reason.

This body provided an even better form of immortality.

‘Amazing.’

—rumble—

Melchizedek smiled as it looked at the Nelkipa's vast energy flowing towards itself.

Melchizedek's previous body was a mechanical lifeform, but if all the systems and structures on top of Nelkipa were to be swept away, it was as good as dead.

But this body was different.

It continuously received all energy and matter from Nelkipa and regenerated itself.

As long as it was on top of Nelkipa and the Nelkipa was still alive, it could not die.

The battle against Hansoo proved this all.

No matter how similar their physical aspects are.

There was no way that Melchizedek, which had no battle experience before this, could beat Hansoo who had tempered himself through countless battles.

But not here.

Above the Nelkipa.

It was a god.

—oooooong—

Nelkipa's skin started moving up and down again.

And the cannons in the distance started to light up again.

Melchizedek laughed at this scene.

“Hahaha! It seems your friends at the crystals are finished!... What shall you do?”

If, in this already advantageous situation, they took back Nelkipa's controls?

There was nothing else to talk about.

Melchizedek smiled.

“You don’t need to hate yourself so much. Even someone like you wouldn’t have been able to predict a situation like this. This is probably the first time anyone has seen an existence like me.”

‘Watch what I do... with this power.’

It would be a great scene once he put Hansoo inside a test tube and placed him on the highest point on Nelkipa.

An even better viewpoint for Hansoo.

Of course, it’ll only be his eyes that could move.

But at that moment—

—Hansoo chuckled as he said:

“How can it be a first?”

“Huh?”

Hansoo smirked and spat out.

“I’ve seen countless beings regenerate like a cockroach. Just like you.”

In the Abyss, there were beings that were even more like cockroaches than Melchizedek.

Beings who truly deserved the name ‘Immortal’.

But the one who had stood up tall in the end.

The one who smashed them apart one by one and descended the Abyss.

Was him.

And as he finished his words—

—rumble—

—the thing he had been saving up until this point.

The thing he’d saved up by twisting all the muscles and mana

inside his body started to squirm violently inside him.

<Yes. That. Do it. Squeeze your body. For every drop. Until it blows up.> The final seed inside Hansoo.

The consciousness stored within the Nine Dragons Strike shouted out in joy.

And with that shout—

—boooooom!—

—the thing he had been continuously spinning and charging around inside him quickly started to spread throughout his body.

Chapter 383: Nerpa (6)

—boooooom!—

The coiled up energy inside Hansoo exploded.

—kadadadadak!—

The strength which he had been suppressing exploded out as it swept through his bones, muscles, and veins like a tsunami.

And at the same time—

—tadak—

—crack—

The lean muscles on Hansoo's body expanded to the point where they seemed as if they were about to explode at any moment.

To the point where the blue armor made snapping noises.

And it was only for a moment.

—kiiiiiiing!—

The blue armor, which had been shocked at the sudden change of its owner, made a joyful noise as it started to suck out Hansoo's energy at an even faster rate.

And the blue armor, which had expanded to fit the new body of the owner, expanded even more.

—kadak—

The armor's blue surface deepened in color to the point where it almost looked black.

Every part of the armor thickened as spikes appeared in some places.

His body had already expanded, but due to the armor also expanding in size, Hansoo's size grew even larger.

His body growing almost to the point of looking as it did before

he became a Transcendent.

“What the f***...!?”

But even before Melchizedek could fully respond to this sudden change— —boooooom!—

—a huge shockwave followed an equally huge noise.

The sound of Hansoo stomping off the ground.

‘Shit!... Where?!’

Melchizedek saw Hansoo disappear from his position, and as he looked around to find him— —whoooosh!—

—it heard the sound of something cutting through the air at a tremendous speed behind it.

A speed that even Nerpa’s godly body could not respond to.

Melchizedek unconsciously covered his body with his arms.

Then—

—boooooom!—

“Arhak!”

—Melchizedek screamed at the powerful impact that had smashed it and slammed it onto the ground.

—crackle! crack!—

Melchizedek’s body, which had been healing every attack up until this point, could not respond to the damage quick enough as it cracked apart and tried its best to absorb the force.

“Aaargh!”

A pain that it couldn’t feel when it didn’t have a living body in the past.

It had set its pain receptors to the lowest setting because it didn’t want to feel such a thing, but that didn’t matter at all.

Despite reducing the pain receptors to that point, this pain was

more than enough to make its body feel like it was shredding into a million pieces.

The feeling of its entire body demolished.

But Melchizedek soon realized it wasn't just a feeling.

'Ugh...'

One strike was almost enough to destroy half its body.

If it hadn't guarded the attack with its instincts, then the damage wouldn't have been limited to just half of its body.

—ssssss!—

The survival instinct inside the Nerpa's body activated as it started to gather the energy and matter from all around it.

And like magic, Melchizedek's body started to heal up.

At an insane speed.

—kacha!—

—ssss—

Flesh mended, bones grew, and muscles healed.

The intestines grew back, and the spine restructured itself.

But despite this, Melchizedek fell into despair.

Because it saw Hansoo lifting up his hammer again above him.

'No!'

—boooooom!—

A storm of attacks started to land on Melchizedek's body.

—boom! boom! boom! boom! boom...

The surface of Nelkipa around Melchizedek tried its best to protect its owner, but it was all futile.

The armor that sprung up from below had turned into dust, allowing the shockwave to blow away the blue spears.

Like a piece of metal hammered down by a giant drop hammer, the surface of Nelkipa that was supporting Melchizedek shook like an earthquake as it got smashed apart.

‘Kuhuk!’

Melchizedek couldn’t even scream out loud.

Its vocal cords and lungs had long since smashed apart.

The Nelkipa was pouring in a tremendous amount of energy and matter to keep Melchizedek alive, but it was futile.

Melchizedek’s body was regenerating at an insane speed.

Fast enough to call it magic.

—boom! boom! boom! boom! boo...

The speed at which Hansoo’s powerful attacks destroyed its body was even faster.

‘F***!...F***!’

The only thing Melchizedek could do—

—was defend.

—kadadadak!—

The blue spears attacking Hansoo all rushed to cover Melchizedek’s body.

And the Nelkipa’s surface tried to pull Melchizedek into the depths of its body.

It had given up on fighting back—it was now entirely focused on defending and escaping.

Melchizedek chuckled as it looked at Hansoo while the surface of Nelkipa surrounded its body.

‘No matter how strong you are... there’s a limit!’

If Hansoo had been able to use that strength from the beginning, he would’ve done so.

There were probably limitations.

He was going berserk for a short duration or had to fulfill a certain condition within that time.

And from what it could see, it was both.

That strength was far beyond what Hansoo could wield.

And Melchizedek saw the origin of that strength.

The black strike that the dragons had created before.

Somehow, Hansoo had managed to cover his entire body with that power instead of using it in one attack.

There was no other way for Hansoo to have gained this much strength in such a short time otherwise.

And there should be a limit.

It seems his attacks also shredded his own body apart as well.

When this was all over, a deadly side effect would kick in.

This was Hansoo's trump card.

As long as it could hold on, it would win.

‘Farewell!’

—SSSS—

Melchizedek chuckled at Hansoo as Nelkipa sucked it into its depths.

It was lucky.

If those people had still tried to suppress the sub-crystals, then it wouldn't have been able to do anything and would have long been turned into a paste.

But thankfully, they had been exhausted.

‘...Ugh. For me to be stuck under such a dangerous situation despite having a regenerative ability like this.’

Melchizedek thought.

It had believed it would win with this strength.

So it had strode out to fight Hansoo.

To personally smash him apart.

But the result was this.

‘I’ll... never drop my guard.’

Melchizedek thought as it looked at its almost fully regenerated body.

—boom! boom! boom!—

The Nelkipa’s skin was shredded apart at an insane speed, but the speed at which Melchizedek was being sucked in was much faster.

And even if its body fully regenerated, it would never fight Hansoo again.

It was a bit embarrassing, but it would hide inside and kill off Hansoo from there.

No matter how strong Hansoo was, if the Nelkipa attacked him for days and days, would he be able to hold on?

‘Nope.’

As Melchizedek chuckled—

—kiiiiiiiiiiiiing!—

—its senses felt something.

No, within its connection with the Nelkipa.

A warning sound.

‘What?’

Melchizedek’s senses locked onto the object causing the Nelkipa to make the warning sounds.

‘...The fleet of flames?’

The Kalkuroun Fleet that was floating outside in space.

They were aiming their attacks towards it.

—kiiiiing—

As Melchizedek saw the fleet ready their attack—
‘Presumptuous.’

—Melchizedek scoffed.

.....

—tatatatatak!—

—tatak!—

N-Aroel sighed as he took control of the internal system of the Kalkuroun fleet.

‘You’re probably thinking that it’s presumptuous, right? You... are correct.’

For them to have that amazing power of the flame, but could only create these toys.

Nelkipa could easily ignore their firepower at this rate.

There was no way a toy like this could pierce through the Nelkipa’s skin and deal a fatal blow.

Melchizedek knew this as well, which was why it had left the Kakuroun Fleet alone.

‘But with me here... the story changes.’

He changed everything.

That was why it had taken over this body to come here.

He could not let the thing that had taken over his body and his ship play around freely.

As N-Aroel smiled coldly and entered the commands— —
kiiiiiiiing!—

—the internal structure of the fleet changed.

The pyro engine that borrowed the strength of the flame.

The engine that was the basis of all the firepower on the fleet started going berserk.

Acting from the commands he inputted.

Like a prophet enlightened to the truth after receiving information beyond a human's capabilities, the engines started to transform and evolve.

To an almost alien-like structure.

And the attacks of the fleet aimed towards a specific location.

A specific target.

‘Crystal.’

—boooooooooom!—

A huge ray of judgment slammed onto the Nelkipa from above.

.....

—ruuuuummmmmbllee!—

“Hah?!”

The giant strike that had descended from above.

Melchizedek, who had been hardening the skin around itself to defend against the strike, exclaimed out loud as it looked at where the attack had landed.

The target was not itself.

But the crystals.

The crystal on Nelkipa had overloaded and shut itself off from the fleet's attack.

‘What the f***...?! How can those insects showcase this much strength?!’

Melchizedek was at a loss since it was trapped within the Nelkipa which it had lost control over.

It knew more than anyone else about the level of the Angkara.

This was not something they could create.

At that moment—

‘...No!’

—an existence flashed past its head.

The owner of this body.

‘Nerpa!’

Melchizedek gritted its teeth.

It had been hit in the back by an existence it had completely forgotten about.

But the rage only lasted for a moment.

—boom! boom! boom! boom!...

‘Ah...F***.’

Melchizedek sighed with despair as it felt huge shockwaves coming from outside.

It realized that this wasn’t the best time to concern itself with something else.

The energy that was smashing apart the Nelkipa to crush itself, a cockroach hidden underground.

‘...Damn. You’ve won.’

As Melchizedek fell into despair—

—booooooom!—

—an attack combined from nine dragons swept through the area Melchizedek had been hiding inside.

Chapter 384: Nerpa (7)

—ooooooooong!—

As the suppressed crystal calmed down— “Haaa...Haa...”

—plop—

—Kiriel, who had been suppressing the crystal, collapsed on onto the floor and groaned.

“Ugh...”

It wasn't just a simple groan, but rather a very painful one.

It was truly hard to suppress the crystal.

‘Enbi Arin... how in the world did you do this?’

She knew why the Nelkipa's skin had briefly stopped attacking them.

Because Enbi Arin was suppressing the other crystal.

So she had dealt with Elis Valentine and tried to suppress the crystal as well.

But what was this...

A pain beyond anything she could imagine.

The energy of the Nelkipa had resisted her energy and retaliated vigorously as if her attempts at suppression had hurt its pride.

And the result of that was Nelkipa shredding apart Kiriel's entire body.

If that strike from above hadn't fallen from the sky and destroyed the crystal, then she really might've died.

“Cough...”

Kiriel coughed up blood as she checked her destroyed organs.

At least she was alive.

Thankfully, this was still within the limits of what she could heal.

At this rate, she could heal as long as she had the time to.

After all, she was a Transcendent.

‘It’s time to move. Right... that’s been bugging me.’

Kiriel pondered where she should head towards first—Enbi Arin or Hansoo—but then frowned as she looked at the Kalkuroun Fleet above her.

.....

—tatak—

—tadadak—

The location where Nelkipa’s main control crystal was now in ruins.

And below the giant crater—

—an existence was looking into the sky, barely alive.

—chiiijijik—

‘Damn...this is it.’

Not only was its body destroyed, but the blow had also broken the core that kept it alive.

The crystal had stopped working as well—there was no hope that it would survive.

Even if Hansoo didn’t kill it off, it would slowly die by itself.

—chiiijijik—

Melchizedek realized its doom as it looked despairingly at the sky.

Towards the red planet in the far distance, Ankara.

It had failed.

Failed to return there.

Failed at unifying Angkara.

‘Well, it’s out of my hands now...’

It hadn’t planned to do all this for the masses.

It was simply due to its curiosity, its vision, and its greed.

Since it was dying, it didn’t care what was going to happen to Angkara.

‘Nerpa... I didn’t expect you to act in such a decisive moment.’

But suddenly, Melchizedek frowned as it looked towards the red fleet in the sky.

The fleet which it expected to descend onto Nelkipa was slowly backing away.

Towards Angkara.

‘Huh?’

That Nerpa should’ve long since taken over that fleet.

Otherwise, there was no way they could showcase such a might.

Which meant that it was the Nerpa’s choice to go to Angkara.

‘Why...?’

Curiosity popped up inside Melchizedek’s mind despite being on the verge of death.

It had believed that the Nerpa would come and retrieve the Nelkipa.

But even before it could finish contemplating, Hansoo appeared before its eyes.

Melchizedek smiled as it saw Hansoo lifting up his hammer.

“Congratulations. From what I hear... this is your fifth. There’s two more to go. I truly hope... you fail in the next zone.”

It wanted to see Hansoo fall into despair, but it looked like it didn't have enough strength to make that happen.

But there would clearly be others stronger than Hansoo who could.

A person who was entirely focused on getting used to the reality.

'I hope... you can smash this guy apart.'

Clementine.

Although Hansoo was amazing, it had truly felt shocked when it had seen Clementine for the first time.

The reason why it was wary of the aliens.

Melchizedek thought of the greatest annoyance in its life as it started to overload its heart.

It wasn't going to let itself be killed.

'You... you didn't kill me. I just simply committed suicide.'

As Melchizedek's half-closed eyes met with Hansoo's— —boom!
—

—Melchizedek's core exploded, its remaining debris turned to dust.

And Hansoo thought of Melchizedek's gaze as he approached its body.

Like in the past, there was a single gift box and a letter.

'Hmm... Let's open the box first.'

Hansoo decided to appease his curiosity by opening the box first.

And from inside, two shiny orbs came out.

Two marbles.

A normal person might've been happy at the sight of a reward.

But as soon as Hansoo saw the two marbles— "....?"

—Hansoo’s expression turned gruesome.

‘Two? Not three?’

The fairies gave out rewards fairly.

There was no way he would’ve been the only one to receive a reward.

Enbi Arin and Kiriell’s roles had contributed too much.

If Kiriell and Enbi Arin hadn’t stopped the explosion of the crystal and suppressed it.

If they hadn’t dealt with Clementine’s underlings while he was dealing with Melchizedek.

He would’ve failed.

Which meant there should’ve been three rewards in this box.

His, Enbi Arin’s, and Kiriell’s.

One each.

Hansoo quickly opened up the letter in his hand.

And a single line was written on the letter.

<It’s two. One for you. One for Kiriell.> ‘F***...Arin!’

—booom!—

Hansoo’s body disappeared.

.....

“Cough... Ugh.”

‘How fast... heh.’

Enbi Arin made a tired expression as she looked at the two streaks of light charging towards her in the distance.

She didn’t want to show them that she was exhausted, but it wasn’t that easy.

She really was tired.

All her organs were burned up and destroyed.

Because she had overexerted herself trying to suppress the crystal.

This giant creature, Nelkipa, did not hold back on the creature trying to control it and resisted her.

Thanks to this, her entire insides had ended up destroyed, and it had even broken her core.

So she knew...

That this was the end of the road for her.

Transcendents weren't amoebas.

There was a limit to how much they could heal, and once they crossed that line, the body could not withstand the energy flowing through it and slowly killed itself off.

And she had long passed that line.

Despite resting, her quickly diminishing flame of life proved this.

'I really did run for a long time.'

Enbi Arin's expression was full of regret.

She was afraid of death.

She wanted to escape this hell and find peace.

So she had fought. And fought. And fought.

To escape the worst-case scenario.

But as death quickly approached her, she realized that it wasn't quite what she expected.

'...It's actually quite nice.'

She could finally rest.

She didn't have to fight anymore.

She didn't have to kill anymore.

She had fought too long.

Twenty years since she had come to this place.

And fifteen years stuck in that dream.

She had fought for thirty-five years and struggled to climb up.

She deserved to rest a little, right?

She had struggled for thirty-five years, no, twenty years excluding the dream, so nobody would say anything if she said she wanted to rest.

‘Nice...’

Enbi Arin weakly turned her head and looked next to her.

“Why... did you help me?”

“...I don’t know.”

Ares Valentine, who also had his insides destroyed from the crystal, smiled at her as he lied down in a similar fashion.

He also didn’t know why he’d done it.

‘Well. It’s not half-bad...’

Ares, who had been trying to figure out his complicated feelings, looked at Enbi Arin’s profile and smiled.

Although the method was a bit different, he was going to ‘go up and rest’ now.

“...”.

Ares Valentine’s eyes lost their light and slowly closed.

And Enbi Arin, who had been looking at Ares in silence, turned around towards Hansoo who had almost arrived and smiled.

‘Thanks to you... I’ve had a busy life.’

Enbi Arin thought of the dream Melchizedek had given her.

In it, she had truly been happy.

Taking over the seven zones and pushing back the Abyss.

Nobody could handle their power, and those precious to them were no longer killed.

Maybe it was a bit too perfect.

A bit too happy.

And if she really cared about her life and hadn't suppressed the crystal.

The scene in her dreams wouldn't have been possible.

'Too bad I won't be able to accompany you.'

She wouldn't be able to follow them, but it didn't matter.

There was somebody else who would achieve it for her.

Although it was only a dream for her.

Hansoo would be able to turn it into reality.

'I wish you the best of luck on the 6th floor as well... Work for my share too. Heh.'

And with this final line of thought—

—SSS—

—Enbi Arin's eyes closed.

.....

"Let's see. Time to hurry. There's no time. Come on, you hunk of metal."

N-Aroel complained to the giant ship, mumbling as he looked at Ankara in the far distance.

He had lost his legacy

He could not lose the flame as well.

The faster he was, the better.

'And from what I heard... those aliens are there as well.'

He'd heard that the aliens were there.

Either hiding in secret or out in the open.

N-Aroel nodded as he remembered something.

'Right. It's called the 6th Zone, right?'

N-Aroel, who had been thinking while looking at Ankara, suddenly looked down at Nelkipa and smiled.

'Well, if fate allows it, then we'll meet again. Anyway, thanks for this time around. Everything was resolved with ease. See you next time, maybe.'

—kuoooooooo!—

The Kalkuroun fleet started to move towards Ankara at full speed.

Chapter 385: Angkara (1)

“Ha...”

Hansoo sighed as he looked at the cross before him.

‘Arin...’

A comrade who had fought with him until the end of his previous life.

‘I hope... you can finally rest well.’

Enbi Arin.

A comrade that had been out of the ordinary from the very beginning.

Most people had stood out from the masses with their leadership, brains, luck, or talent.

Without such distinguishing characteristics, humankind would never have gained enough strength to reach the Temporal Crystal.

A hundred out of six billion humans.

Becoming strong from around the middle point was nowhere enough to reach that height.

They had to be ready from the very beginning and monopolize every method to become stronger.

So their comrades had climbed the Otherverse by following the paths of powerhouses.

But not Enbi Arin.

Enbi Arin had been a weakling when she arrived.

Her body was weak.

She did not have charisma or leadership qualities.

Nor was she lucky.

The ones who had arrived with her were imprisoned criminals.

She had been dragged here while doing some public volunteer work at a prison.

And after being captured by those men who were full of hatred and lawlessness, she had gone through a lot of hard times.

Thankfully she had realized her Trait of Tainted Emotion and ripped apart everyone who had caused her harm, but the memories of those times continued to haunt her.

Since Enbi Arin had rarely spoken of it even in his past life.

<If that hadn't happened back then... wouldn't my life be a bit more comfortable? I would've been a bit weaker... And if I had died earlier then I wouldn't have had to fight for so long.> '...I guess your wishes have come true.'

He'd hoped that Enbi Arin would never accomplish her wishes.

But she had.

Hansoo looked bitter as he thought of the calm and comfortable expression Enbi Arin made as she died.

"...I came up because you called me, but I didn't expect to see this."

Ekidu.

Ekidu, who had controlled the humans with Karhal below, spoke in a bitter tone as she looked at the cross before her.

Enbi Arin.

She hadn't known her for a long time, but it was enough to become friends and have trust in each other.

They had searched for Hansoo and fought for the humans during those two years of Hansoo's disappearance.

<I just want to meet somebody nice, have a kid and live in peace. That's my dream. Even better if my family didn't need to fight.> Despite being the leader of the giant clan called The Cross, her

dreams were very simple.

She was shocked at this, but she liked that about Enbi.

Since she had also fought for the village with a similar mindset.

And after hearing Enbi Arin's scar from the past, these thoughts were further reinforced.

When they parted, they had wished for their dreams to come true, but to reunite like this.

‘...Dumbo.’

Ekidu looked at the cross in the middle of Nelkipa's surface and then turned to Hansoo and Kiriel.

It felt like she would be trapped in this sadness if she didn't change the topic.

This world was not kind enough to let them hide behind their sorrow.

Ekidu shook off most of the thoughts in her head and asked Hansoo: "...Is it all over for this place, Hansoo?"

Hansoo nodded.

Melchizedek was gone, and Clementine's forces were gone as well.

The only thing left were the few Abyssal beasts and a few hidden humans.

This was not enough to threaten those coming up from below.

Kiriel, who also had a sad expression, joined in on the conversation.

"What happened to the zone below?"

Ekidu smiled as she replied:

"It's going well. The kids are quickly becoming Transcendents as well."

Because they had no way to efficiently control the Transcendents in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd zones they didn't make any, but the 4th Zone where Karhal and Ekidu resided was different.

Even if 1-Star Transcendents appeared, the 2-Star Transcendent Karhal could easily handle them.

Since he could control them, they just let them loose as well.

‘And... it doesn't seem like we have the leisure to hold back from making them.’

—rumble—

Ekidu looked at the lightning surrounding the elevator.

The space between the zones divided by the elevator twisted from time to time.

And due to this, it was causing countless bolts of lightning to crash around it.

A very unstable-looking scene.

Ekidu asked Hansoo:

“...How long do we have?”

She wasn't very specific, but it was clear what she was talking about.

Time until the Abyss collapsed around them.

Hansoo replied in a heavy voice:

“Not much. Really.”

—rumble—

Hansoo looked at the elevator.

There really wasn't much time.

Five months at most.

Maybe even less.

He had to unify and organize the seven zones before that.

Using that as the basis, creating as many Transcendents and preparing for battle.

Hansoo looked at Ekidu.

“I want you to take care of this place.”

Meaning he wanted her to receive the soul fragment and remain here.

Somebody needed to remain here to enforce the rules and lead the ones coming up after them.

Ekidu made a helpless expression and replied:

“Ugh. Fine, I guess I’ll be bored for a while. There’s really nobody else here.”

Ekidu shrugged as she looked at the bare plains.

A colossal creature.

If Hansoo and Kiriel left, she would be left alone.

‘I want to follow, but... it seems like that won’t be possible.’

They had both been 2-Stars up until recently.

But somehow Kiriel and Hansoo had crossed the wall in that short period of time and had become a step stronger.

The limits of 3-Star Transcendents.

If they had both remained below, then they would not have been able to become this strong.

They became stronger to meet the dangers they came across.

Ekidu thought of this basic rule of the world and shrugged her shoulders.

‘Well, I guess I’ll just be lonely and not bored.’

Ekidu thought as she looked at Hansoo.

There was a lot to do.

Even if she received the soul fragment, she needed to rise to the level of a 3-Star Transcendent in order to control and raise the ones coming up from below in an efficient manner.

Which meant she had to hunt the remaining Abyssal beasts and become stronger.

And unite the scattered humans in the 5th Zone.

‘What to do about this giant thing...’

Guooooooooo!

Ekidu looked at the Nelkipa which had lost its owner, had its crystal broken and was now just aimlessly floating round space. She asked: “Can... can we not use this?”

Hansoo looked at the crystal for a moment and shook his head.

“No.”

‘It’s... quite damaged..’

Hansoo thought of the streak of light that had destroyed the crystal.

The Fleet of Flames.

Their goal seemed to be the same as his.

Destroying Melchizedek.

That was probably why they’d helped him.

But if they really wanted to help, then they could’ve attacked Melchizedek directly.

Since that would’ve been more efficient and a more sure-fire method than attacking the crystal.

But there was a reason why they attacked the crystal.

They had destroyed the main crystal and gotten rid of any possible control of Nelkipa.

‘If not for that... I would’ve kept Melchizedek alive and tried to use it.’

Melchizedek probably knew that as well and self-destructed.

If it could control the Nelkipa, its worth would’ve been much higher.

But since it could not control the Nelkipa anymore, its existence was basically worthless.

‘There’s still something suspicious.’

Hansoo thought as he looked at the melted-down crystal.

That power was not something the Fleet of Flames could make.

For the crystal that even he, a 3-Star Transcendent, couldn’t destroy with ease.

They had completely melted that crystal down.

If that much strength could’ve been gathered in the first place, then melting down Aokan as a whole was possible.

Or just destroy Melchizedek’s metal castle before it moved to another body.

But the Fleet of Flames had done so—they had melted the crystal. Which meant one thing.

An outside force had come into play.

At that moment—

—Hansoo thought of Melchizedek’s enraged roar right before the Nine Dragons Strike had attacked it for the last time.

<NERPA!!!>

Nerpa.

The owner of the body that Melchizedek ate.

‘...So they interfered, huh?’

Hansoo looked towards the direction that the Fleet of Flames had disappeared to and shook his head.

They would meet soon.

Since they had to go up now too.

—kadak—

Hansoo gripped onto the marble that the fairy had given him as a present and looked towards Angkara.

.....

“Ahh... Land. It’s really been a long time.”

As N-Aroel was admiring the giant planet before his eyes, he heard an enraged voice.

“You... do you think you’ll be able to live after doing all this?”

The captain, R-Koronaita Nell, gritted his teeth at N-Aroel.

There was a limit to how many crazy actions he could tolerate.

For him to take over the entire fleet...

And R-Koronaita Nell had an inkling as well.

That only their outer appearances were the same and there was something else inside that body.

Something unlike them.

“You’re being confident now, but as soon as we arrive, your body will burn up from the power of the flame.”

And at those words of R-Koronaita Nell—

“Kehehehehehe.”

—N-Aroel smirked as he listened.

“You ungrateful vermin. You want to burn your owner with the gift we gave you?”

“Huh?”

N-Aroel chuckled as he said:

“Just as I said. The flame you wield... was originally ours.”

—boooooom!—

The giant planet of flames, Angkara.

N-Aroel looked at the red light shooting up from the cracks between the continents in reminiscence.

Chapter 386: Angkara (2)

—boooooom!—

Kiriel went through the elevator, looking at the gift the fairy had given her and made a content expression.

She then turned to Hansoo and asked:

“Where shall we go from here?”

She didn't care about his psychic ability or whatever.

She only knew that she could just trust in him and follow him.

After hearing Kiriel's question, Hansoo thought: 'Planet of the Flame, it's been a while.'

The planet of war and the Flame, Angkara.

A planet of continuous internal strife because of the <Flame> underneath the planet's surface.

There was only one thing he needed to do there.

Take over the <Flame>.

If he could take over the Flame that was the country's source of strength...

Then the natives of Angkara, who had built their entire civilization upon the power of the Flame, wouldn't be able to threaten him anymore.

The differences in their physiques existed after all.

So this time around, he just needed to take over the controls of the <Flame>.

There was no need to kill them all or drive them away.

'Well... just because I don't have to kill them doesn't mean it'll end peacefully.'

Hansoo thought.

It was similar to modern society.

If a random existence came along and tried to steal all of humanity's electric power, nobody would stand idle.

And to them, the Flame was something much more important than electricity.

They could not hand over control of the <Flame>.

‘Well, whatever happens... I must hurry.’

If he didn't take control of Angkara, matters would become difficult.

Since if he didn't, sooner or later they would start aiming for the Nelkipa again.

If waves and waves of fleets like the Kalkuroun Fleet came along, then there was no way the humans below could deal with them.

The strikes from space would sweep them all away.

And he could not let that happen.

Not just because he had to take over the 6th Zone but because he had to keep the 5th Zone safe as well.

“Well, we have a guide this time so it should be easier.”

Kiriel looked at the man standing next to them who was making an unpleasant expression.

And from her look—

“Ugh... You damned monsters.”

—R-Korun Nell, the man who fought Kiriel in the past, looked back at Kiriel and Hansoo.

.....

‘Damn. I didn't want to get mixed up with them again...’

R-Korun Nell thought to himself.

He'd realized the moment they forced him to blow the train up

that he had fallen into a nasty trap.

He'd ended up slamming the research center straight into Aokan.
Crazy bastards.

But they had somehow found him in order to use him again.

It was his fault for just quietly hiding away, thinking that they had no more use for him.

Kiriel chuckled as she looked at R-Korun Nell.

“Don't look at me like that. What were you going to do without us? Were you going to live here forever?”

From those words—

“...”

—R-Korun Nell merely gritted his teeth and stayed silent.

Because her words were right.

He'd quietly hid himself in a nearby refugee center awaiting rescue because he knew even having ten lives wouldn't be enough if he got swept up with them.

Trusting in the fact that the Kalkuroun Fleet would not leave him behind, a Dragon God Soldier from the Nell family.

And how he had rejoiced when he saw nine Dragon God Soldiers descending from the fleet.

But he had been in despair ever since.

The Dragon God Soldiers never came to his rescue.

Aokan, where they had charged into, had blown up.

And the Kalkuroun Fleet, after sending down a single ray of attack, had left for Ankara.

Lost in despair and wondering what to do from that point on...

These people came to find them.

<We need a guide. Follow us.>

They had somehow found him deep in hiding and simply dragged him along.

To this strange elevator.

And at this moment, they were rising up at a fast pace.

‘...I’m not sure if this is the right choice.’

He didn’t have a choice really, but because he was feeling the dangerous aura the two were letting out with each second, he didn’t feel quite comfortable.

Kiriel tapped his shoulder and said:

“Don’t feel so burdened. We even gave you back the Dragon God Armor, right?”

Kiriel had changed out of R-Korun Nell’s Dragon God Armor to one in better condition, taken from the nine Dragon God Soldiers.

Of course, she returned R-Korun Nell’s original armor.

R-Korun Nell clenched his teeth.

There was only reason why they’d given his armor back.

Since they had the confidence to crush him no matter what he tried to do anymore.

This overbearing aura.

‘What in the world... Did those aliens go through a metamorphic stage or something? How did they get this strong in such a short amount of time?’

R-Korun Nell looked fearfully at Kiriel.

This girl had been at a similar level as him back at the giant train.

Well, she’d pushed him back, but they still had a good fight.

But look at her now.

She had evolved into a powerful existence far beyond his

imagination.

An existence that even a truckload of people like him wouldn't be able to handle.

He'd felt a similar power level of a Dragon God Soldier when she wore the armor in the past, but it was much more different now.

The fleet.

Angkara's proud Fleet of Flames.

That small body was letting out an aura that was as strong as an entire fleet.

A fleet that was designed to destroy entire moons.

'Ugh, whatever.'

R-Korun Nell stopped thinking about it.

He decided to just go with the flow.

There was no way for him to beat them anyway.

'Anyway... something like this existed, huh?'

R-Korun Nell looked around the elevator.

Although most B and A-Levels, and even N-Levels, did not know much about these aliens.

He, being a Dragon God Soldier, an R-Level and a member of a family, had picked up some stories.

'Anyway... I didn't know how they appeared, but this is how it happened, huh?'

R-Korun Nell looked curiously at the elevator, which they couldn't make even with their advanced technology.

But then—

—oooooong—

—as if the elevator was stopping, it started to slow down.

—kiiiiing!—

The elevator doors opened as a bright light seeped in through the gap.

—whooosh!—

A strong wind entered the space of the elevator.

And R-Korun Nell’s eyes twitched at the sight that appeared before him.

‘We... really arrived.’

He had been skeptical.

But they had really returned to his planet through this strange elevator.

A familiar scene.

Amidst the ruins.

A few buildings that still seemed to be in use stood tall while maintaining their structural integrity.

And the old armored vehicles moving through those buildings.

R-Korun Nell frowned when he saw this and spat out: “The trash dump... I wondered where you guys popped out from, but I guess this was it.”

“Trash dump?”

Kiriell looked at R-Korun Nell in curiosity.

.....

Planet Angkara.

Although the owners of Angkara had succeeded in creating a great civilization with the power of the Flame, they couldn’t stay in peace with one another.

They had fought for a thousand years.

They needed more strength to win over their opponent, so they

continued to create new and powerful weapons.

Although there were countless empires, families, and nations, there were bound to be those who were more advanced than others.

So during the thousand-year battle, they had increased their strength by either uniting the other nations or destroying them entirely.

“The Neropa Union and the Pompeion Empire are the two largest powers that remained after all this.”

R-Korun Nell said as he looked at Kiriel.

The Pompeion Empire that had devoured the entire Pompeion continent up north.

And the three families in the south.

The Nell, Ron, and Pael families.

Although these three families had fought each other in the past to increase their individual strength, that was something they couldn't afford to do anymore.

Since the Pompeion Empire was on the cusp of sweeping them away.

So after feeling the dangers of the Pompeion Empire's fast expansion, the Nell, Ron, and Pael families decided to unite and create the greatest alliance ever recorded in history.

The result of this was the Neropa Union which succeeded in rivaling the Pompeion Empire.

“This is the place where the survivors hide—in the shadows of the ruins that the two forces created while they were busy battling each other.”

R-Korun Nell's expression turned dark as he spoke.

Small and weak countries, unions, families, and tribes.

Their endings were clear from their limits in strength and power.

Either stick to one of the two sides.

Or be erased from history.

The history of war up until this point had proven this.

But these guys picked neither of the two choices.

No, they were using the situation for their own benefit.

By keeping the balance between the two forces.

Or making ridiculous requests by threatening to help the other side if they didn't comply.

But their strength was a bit too significant for the two forces to simply ignore, so they often fulfilled their requests.

‘We'll make sure to destroy you all once the war ends. You presumptuous bastards, making such requests without any kind of backing...’

R-Korun Nell suddenly flinched.

‘...Backing?’

Did something exist in the trash dump that they could trust in?

At that moment—

—Hansoo chuckled as he spoke to R-Korun Nell.

“We've come to a good spot.”

‘Perfect.’

Out of the three locations, he didn't know where the elevator would arrive at.

But the place the natives called the trash dump, or the <Reyunion>, was the perfect place to come to.

There was something he needed to acquire here.

‘The External Flame Divine Tool.’

A divine tool created to control the external Flame.

The entire planet.

A divine tool of legends that had the power to control the <Flame> hidden within the planet.

‘Just wait a bit, I’ll bring you some friends. Of course... there are probably a lot of flies buzzing around you.’

—oooooong—

Precious artifacts were destined to have flies swarming around it.

Mainly, people who didn’t know the true value behind them.

Hansoo looked at the Mjolnir in his hand and chuckled at the beings who were approaching them from a distance.

.....

A woman asked a man in front of her:

“We just need to trust you, right?”

The man nodded.

“Yeah. Once we have that, we can turn things around. The Neropa Union will become a beacon of hope. That Sangjin guy told me this.”

Sangjin, nicknamed the King of Hell.

The man laughed as he spoke the name of the man who’d led the army of the fallen.

Chapter 387: Flameless Land (1)

—kuooooooooong—

A man was digging as he mentioned the name of the King of Hell.

“Yeah, that Sangjin told me all about it. He’s not really the greatest friend of mine, but he wouldn’t have lied. So don’t worry. Everything is fine, alright?”

The girl, Erunheim, gritted her teeth as she listened to the man.

‘Damn...I don’t know how much I can trust him.’

Although they had allied due to unfortunate circumstances, and they did have quite a considerable amount of strength, she couldn’t drop her guard.

They were from a different race after all.

Aliens.

Unlike her, who had to stay and die in this world, they were just passersby.

Since they were in a different situation, she didn’t know what their true goals were either.

But she could only stay with this man and the other aliens.

Her situation wasn’t good enough to just ignore them and walk away.

Her opponent was too strong.

‘The Nell family... those damned bastards.’

Thinking of those guys, her old scars hurt.

The scars of that day when their nation had fallen to the invaders, and they were forced to escape with the other refugees.

‘Soon. I will have... my revenge.’

The woman held onto her side as she frowned.

There was no way to beat them face-to-face.

So she had thrown away everything and escaped to this place.

And the Dragon God Armors, fleets, soldiers, and the factories.

All of these things.

They had stolen a bit here and there, but that was the limit.

To go against the Neropa Union and the Pompeion Empire that continuously pumped out fleets?

Suicide.

Of course, the gap between them was already large, and it was only growing larger.

So they needed something to change.

Even if they had to hold hands with the devil.

‘Ha...’

Erunheim looked at the man before her eyes and said: “Are you sure everything is going according to plan?”

The man shrugged.

“Didn’t I tell you already? That’s all we need. Why did you guys run here? It’s because of that, right?”

—rumble—

Erunheim looked at the shining object in the depths and shut up.

‘Right...’

The place the outsiders called the <trash dump> was actually a land of mystery.

They had tried multiple times to live in this place, but they always failed.

Because mysterious monsters roamed the depths of this place.

Of course, it wasn’t a land of mystery because they couldn’t deal

with it using the Dragon God Armor or their fleet.

No, the exact opposite.

Although the monsters looked scary and were much stronger than normal people, they were still nothing in the face of the Flame's power.

The monsters simply melted before the Dragon God Soldiers and their fleet.

But there was another reason why they couldn't enter.

Because they couldn't use the power of the Flame inside here.

'Yeah...'

Erunheim looked to the depths again.

To the bright-red crystal.

Nobody knew what that palm-sized crystal was, where it came from, or what it was made of.

Since they had only found it by luck anyway.

But they were clear about one thing.

The crystal down there had the power to suppress the <Flame>.

No matter how powerful the force.

The area surrounding the small crystal, spanning a radius of 500 kilometers, could not use the power of the Flame.

That was how powerful it was.

Despite just being a tiny crystal.

It suppressed the <Flame>, which powered a fleet that could destroy an entire moon.

And they had been able to hide in Reunion because of this.

Without that, either the Neropa Union's fleet or a Dragon Soldier would have long since killed them off.

In other words...

With that...

They wouldn't need to fear the nine fleets under the Neropa Union.

Nor their proud army of Dragon God Soldiers.

Since they were nothing more than hunks of metal without the Flame.

She would show them their strength.

'Yes... this is all we need.'

Erunheim glared at the tiny red crystal that refused to come out.

.....

—rumble—

Kiriel shrugged as she stared at the people walking towards them.

Although they seemed like they had enhanced bodies, they were nothing more than normal people in her eyes.

And though they had weapons in their hand, they looked like normal weapons and not weapons that used the Flame.

'Pfft.'

Kiriel scoffed inwardly as she stared at the people who looked at them for a moment before quickly running away.

She had been worried about Dragon God Soldiers or the fleet ambushing them.

Despite how easily she could handle the Dragon God Soldiers, the fleet was a different story.

The power of the giant metal fortresses in the sky was nothing compared to the Dragon God Soldiers.

She was worried that they'd fly beneath the atmosphere to attack them, but it seems that wasn't the case.

R-Korun Nell's mumbles proved it all.

“Ugh... This cursed land. Makes me uneasy.”

—clank—

—clank—

R-Korun Nell complained since his Dragon God Armor had turned into a piece of normal armor due to the absence of the Flame's power.

This is what he hated most about the trash dump.

Kiriel seemed to have realized something as she looked at R-Korun Nell and said to Hansoo: “Anyway... It looks like most of us lived in this place before the barrier against the Abyss had been destroyed right?”

Hansoo nodded.

It was just as she said.

Outside this place, where the Flame's power still existed, normal adventurers couldn't beat the power of the Dragon God Soldiers and the fleet no matter what.

But it was different inside here.

Without the power of the Flame.

They were just like normal humans.

Although they were slightly stronger than normal humans because of their genetic and body modifications, they were still weak.

So most of the normal adventurers had stayed in here before the Abyss fell on them.

They had hunted the monsters that roamed around here and then climbed up after gathering enough runes.

Of course, the difficulty was extremely high since this place was the 6th Zone after all.

There were also a few other problems, but they didn't really matter much.

Since the people who had survived back then were the elites of elites working under Clementine.

‘But... not anymore.’

Their goals were different so the way they acted should be different as well.

If their sole goal was survival, then, of course, things would be simpler.

They just needed to stick around in here for a bit, and then go up after killing some monsters.

But this wasn't good.

If they didn't handle this place, then the Nelkipa would sooner or later end up attacked.

What good would it do if the 6th Zone was safe when the 5th Zone was blocked off?

So they had to deal with this place.

Obtain the External Flame Divine Tool and then unite all the areas.

‘...A simple change in the goal changes the enemy.’

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders as he thought of the Pompeion Empire and the Neropa Union.

He just needed to take things step by step.

Of course, it wasn't only their goals that had changed but their situations as well.

Since they weren't normal adventurers whose growth was limited by the wall but instead were Transcendents.

Of course, without strength, people couldn't go out from this place even if they wanted to.

They were stuck in this place.

But Transcendents were different.

3-Stars could fight with starships.

And 4-Stars could even fight against an entire fleet.

—kuduk—

Hansoo felt the hammer and the blue armor as he started to move.

“Let’s go.”

According to what he knew, this place was the outskirts of the <Flameless Land>, a place that suppressed the strength of the Flame due to the External Flame Divine Tool.

And the location of the divine tool was at the very center of the Flameless Land.

They needed to get there first.

Kiriell followed after Hansoo as she asked:

“Right... so are Clementine’s underlings our current enemy?”

If the people of the Flame weren’t a threat to them, then there were only two types of beings that could threaten them.

The monsters of the Abyss.

And Clementine’s underlings.

Since the two were those who disliked them the most.

Hansoo shook his head.

“I need to look at the situation for a bit... It could be a bit different.”

With a change in their objectives, the situation would change.

In other words, their objectives might change depending on the situation.

He had opened the barrier to the Abyss, and the others had gained the strength to roam outside the Flameless Land.

‘Clementine... would not have picked the choice of sitting around.’

And if Clementine had picked the choice of escaping this tiny pen and escaping into the vast land past it...

Who would have taken over this leaderless place instead?

‘This would be a good place to gain some strength.’

Hansoo thought, looking around the Flameless Land.

.....

—swooooosh!—

—kuaaaahhh!—

A head flew off from a blade.

And the beheaded existence made a grotesque noise as it fell to the ground.

But it was clear that its existence wasn’t an ordinary one.

It should have left behind a corpse, but that existence quickly disappeared and melted away.

—ssssss—

A man picked up a crystal where the corpse should’ve been and smiled.

‘Good. Very good.’

This was an amazing place to raise one’s strength.

He was able to monopolize the Abyssal monsters that came out from the elevator with nobody to disturb him.

The people of Reunion lacked the power to go against him, so he just needed to slowly hunt and raise his strength.

Even better since they treated him with the utmost respect.

He was living like a king.

But the man's expression turned dark.

There was only one reason why he was living this life.

Because those who truly deserved to live like kings had all left.

—crack!—

The man tightly clenched the crystal in his hand and thought: 'Those bastards... left to take over the Empire and Neropa Union. I could have as well. Sangjin... You aren't the only one who's so amazing and all that.'

As long as he could gain that mysterious object, he could leave as well.

The man headed towards the headquarters as he clenched his teeth.

'Let's see what news the scouts have.'

The people of Reunion were weak, but they were numerous in number and had good communication methods, so they were useful as scouts.

The man thought of the scouts which he'd sent out in case the Transcendents came back and quickly started to move.

Chapter 388: Flameless Land (2)

—boooooom!—

“There’s too many weaklings around here.”

Kiriell said with a shrug, smashing away the skull of an Abyssal monster.

Maybe it’s because they were on the outskirts, but there were no humans here.

But there were quite a lot of others filling their spot.

—SSSS—

Hansoo picked up the crystal left behind by the corpse and said to Kiriell: “Maybe it’s because people don’t live here. They probably didn’t clean this place up that well.”

It was just as he said.

If the area where the humans lived and the area where the Abyssal monsters appeared were in the same place...

And there weren’t enough humans to clean them all up...

It wouldn’t be weird to find Abyssal monsters in a place where humans didn’t exist.

‘Or the opposite.’

But then—

—R-Korun Nell gave the answer.

“Dammit... Who would want to live in a place swarming with these things? Those pieces of trash... For them to let these things roam around here... The Neropa Union would never let this happen.”

Hansoo nodded at R-Korun Nell.

Those words were correct as well.

They probably hadn't expanded their powers up to this point because of all these monsters.

But Kiriel shrugged her shoulders as she looked to the distance.

"Anyway... what shall we do about them? I'm not really into being stalked."

R-Korun Nell frowned at her question.

"... Is someone watching us? Since when?"

"Hmm. Ever since we arrived? They're pretending to run away but keep watching us from a distance."

"What the..."

R-Korun Nell was confused.

Why were these two ignoring those spies?

Intel was the most important thing in a battle.

No matter how large your force.

No matter how many talents you had.

If they didn't know what they were going against, but the enemy knew about them?

Their lives would be in danger.

That is the battlefield.

But these two were just leaving those spies alone.

"Why aren't you dealing with them?! You can easily kill them!"

R-Korun Nell asked.

He knew that this woman in front of him was a monster.

She could easily snipe those scouts that were dozens of kilometers away.

But Kiriel ignored R-Korun Nell and asked Hansoo: "What shall we do?"

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders.

“Leave them alone. They’re probably having a huge headache trying to figure out what to do with us.”

‘We’ll see... what they really do.’

—kacha!—

Kyaaaak!

Hansoo stomped on an Abyssal monster that popped out from beneath the ground and thought.

These monsters weren’t strong at all.

But this was more than enough to massacre the people of Reyunion who couldn’t wield the Flame.

Which meant that there was a Transcendent who was fighting the Abyssal race alongside the people of Reyunion.

But if so, that brought up another question.

If the Transcendents existed, and they were in an alliance with the people of Reyunion, why were these monsters still roaming around freely?

The Transcendents could easily resolve this.

Which meant one thing.

‘They aren’t really on the friendliest terms. Let’s see what happens.’

He just needed to do his own job.

—crunch!—

Hansoo smashed away another monster charging towards him and continued on his way, all while ignoring the scouts in the distance.

.....

“...More aliens?”

“Yes.”

“Mmm...”

Erunheim frowned.

There were seven people with the same uniform standing by Erunheim.

Same uniforms, but each gave out a different impression.

The seven people, who despite wearing identical outfits, each radiated an aura that was vastly different from the rest.

But they still had some similarities between them.

First, they were all leaders of a family, a nation, a union, or a tribe.

Second, their forces had all been defeated, and they had been forced to escape to this place.

A man in the corner spoke out.

“Didn’t they say that no more aliens would come up? Are you sure you checked properly?”

The scout nodded as he replied:

“They could easily smash apart the C-types with just their bare hands. Very, very easily.”

“...Hmm.”

Everyone fell silent.

‘They lied... They told us that no more aliens would come up.’

Gacherat, the patriarch of the Hun family, thought to himself.

They didn’t know the exact details concerning the aliens’ situation.

They had no way of finding out detailed information about beings that could jump between dimensions.

But the aliens who held a certain power within their Reunion

territory had often shouted with confidence: <Haha! There will be no more of us coming up after this. So you should treat us well! The ones who left won't return, and there won't be any more coming up!> 'Damned bastards...'

Gacherat gritted his teeth as he thought of their cocky attitudes.

Although his situation was grim at this moment, he was once a ruler of a vast territory.

His family also had fleets that could cut across the skies just as well as the Dragon God Soldiers.

The <Hun> family had maintained their survival throughout the thousand-year war—they were not a family that could be made light of by some aliens with meager strength.

But all of that did not matter in this place.

Since they couldn't use the Flame in here.

But ironically, they were able to keep their lives staying here while escaping from the eyes of the Neropa Union.

Instead, they placed their lives in the hands of those aliens, receiving their protection.

Without them, they had no way of dealing with the strange monsters crawling around this place.

They would be killed off in a month without the aliens.

But this made them feel more and more uneasy.

A relationship like this always ended with the destruction of one side.

Even more so if one side was as cocky and proud as those guys.

A few days ago, the aliens had almost dragged off a few of his family members into their beds.

If his daughter hadn't been a part of that group and he hadn't stepped up to beg for them, the aliens would have definitely taken

them away.

‘...Taking the crystal is one thing, but why must they do this? We have to deal with those guys.’

They didn’t have a method until this point, but a new variable had just appeared.

And it was clear that Gacherat wasn’t the only one with these thoughts as the other leaders within Reyunion nodded at each other.

Erunheim also seemed to have sensed this as she said: “Let’s approach them carefully. Do you all agree?”

Most of the other aliens were just killing off the monsters while enjoying alcohol and women in a specific location.

Which meant that if they blocked the eyes of the aliens, they would have no way of realizing that more aliens had appeared.

That would give them more than enough time to have a discussion.

‘We don’t know how strong the newcomers are, but...’

Even if they were weaker than the ones already in Reyunion, it didn’t matter.

As long as they figured out a weak point or their relationships with other forces, it would give the people of Reyunion a huge advantage.

“Ugh... things were better before those guys left.”

One person thought back to the day when the aliens had split up and left.

“No, we didn’t have a shred of hope back then... But at least we have something now.”

“Right...”

Everyone nodded.

A tiger could not be dealt with.

But a fox pretending to be a king after the tiger has left could be dealt with.

Soon—

—the leaders of Reyunion all split up and started sending messages to their families and people.

.....

“So, nothing is happening?”

<Yes. There seem to be no movements from both the Pompeion Empire and the Neropa Union.> “Hmm... Well. Good.”

Erunheim got annoyed at the man’s casual attitude and said: <Anyway, please focus a bit more on dealing with the monsters. You promised to deal with the B-Levels in Zone 113, but what is this? Almost two hundred people died yesterday because of this.> “Huh? I told them to deal with it, but I guess they didn’t. Alright. I’ll go over and deal with them properly today.> <...>

Erunheim was at a loss at his response, and she clenched her teeth and turned off the screen.

The man scoffed as he looked to the person next to him.

“They’re treating us like idiots, right?”

The man standing by the side nodded.

“Yes.”

“Damned bastards.”

The man scoffed.

Even monkeys knew about the importance of intel in a battle.

Why would they leave every eye and ear to those guys?

There was a reason why he didn’t personally gather intel.

There was no need to.

—pazzzzk—

“Ugh...”

A body destroyed from torture.

The machinery parts inside his body had long been destroyed as well.

The man looked at the woman beneath him and chuckled.

“It really is a nice place. Nobody notices when a person disappears.”

The reason they left some monsters alone wasn’t because they were lazy.

But rather, it was convenient for them to exist.

‘Even if a person disappears, we can just say the monsters killed them.’

Why would there be a reason for him to gather intel?

When he could just kidnap someone who already collected the intel?

“Let’s see... Turn it on. You have something you saved up, right?”

“Ahh...”

The woman hurriedly moved her hands and activated the machine before her eyes.

Although it had a secure lock and the aliens couldn’t even figure out how to use it.

Although she had received countless training for various tortures and had hardened her mind.

These guys were different.

‘Beasts... Monsters...’

The scout, Kamel, hurriedly turned on the machine as she stared

at the man who seemed to have crawled through hell.

Soon—

—chiiijijiik—

—the machine crackled as it played a video.

Displaying the clear faces of two men and a woman.

And the man's expression quickly changed at this sight.

Confusion at first.

To disbelief.

And then joy.

“Hahahaha! Nice! Kang Hansoo! You didn't go up? Hahahaha!”

‘Sangjin, the man you spent so long searching for... he's right here!’

Although his body was different, how could one not know about Hansoo?

That blinding being.

The man laughed as he spoke to his underling.

“Focus on gathering the crystal! I need to go somewhere!”

—boom!—

Flames shrouded the man's body, and he disappeared.

Chapter 389: Flameless Land (3)

‘It’s been a while, but... it’s really a sight.’

Hansoo continued to look around as he headed inwards.

At all the broken down Dragon God Armor.

At all the starships destroyed from the result of a hasty landing.

‘It seems they really escaped in a hurry.’

The Reyunion’s weapons.

Hansoo looked at the ships that had crashed due to the lack of the Flame’s strength.

He’d never thought of going against the Flame in the past, so he had never cared about it, but he knew now.

As to how powerful the Flame’s strength was.

A strength that was strong enough to go against the Transcendents who’d crossed the wall.

And that was still a small fraction in comparison to the true strength of the Flame sleeping inside the planet.

But inside this area, all of that strength was forbidden.

Because of the existence of the External Flame Divine Tool.

At first, no one knew who had created this tool.

There were no traces of the creator.

But Hansoo knew after going back into the past.

As to who’d shoved that Flame into this planet.

And who’d hidden the tool to control the Flame in this land.

‘...Nerpa.’

The Nelkipa that orbited Angkara and that existence hidden inside the Nelkipa.

Hansoo could deduce many things looking at the Nerpa who'd gone off to Angkara the moment it woke up.

Of course, this didn't answer every question.

'Why is he coming here, though?'

Hansoo thought of the Kalkuroun Fleet that should be slowly approaching this place.

.....

Inside the giant starship.

R-Koronaita Nell was dumbfounded as he listened to N-Aroel's words.

"You... you gave us the Flame?"

R-Koronaita Nell shouted out in rage.

"Don't lie! What kind of words are those?!"

Although they gave it the simple name of <Flame>.

It was not just a simple ball of flame.

The small sun that was sleeping inside the planet.

The <Flame>, hidden inside the shell of this planet, was something to be revered and feared.

Everybody could see the red sun of their planet through the <Valley of Retribution> between the continents.

It was the source of life for their planet, which had once been doomed to freeze to death after their previous sun had died out.

Giving their race the power to control the fleet and travel through the universe.

They only called it a <Flame>, but in reality, it was more like a sun.

N-Aroel, the Nerpa, chuckled.

"Yeah? Then is it logical for a sun to stay trapped within a tiny

planet? To release that kind of energy without control, you guys clearly know that it should've long since reduced your entire planet into a blazing ball of flames.”

“...Ugh.”

R-Koronaita Nell fell silent.

Those words were correct.

That was a question that no researcher on Angkara could answer.

A ball of energy trapped within their planet that should've been tens of thousands of times larger than what it appeared.

Maintaining a very calm state that wasn't causing any harm to their planet that surrounded it like a thin shell.

Very illogical indeed.

The Nerpa chuckled towards Angkara that had now appeared before his eyes.

‘I didn't know this would happen.’

The <Blazing Jade> that the Nerpa had bestowed upon them thousands of years ago.

They had stepped out and bestowed the <Flame> to a planet that was about to freeze due to the death of their sun.

Although it wasn't as big as the original sun, the Nerpa had dug out the insides of that giant planet—which was already many times larger than a normal planet—and placed the <Blazing Jade> inside it.

When his race had been in their prime, something like that wasn't difficult nor was it a problem.

But not anymore.

The simple gift that they had given away was now his only hope.

A flame that they had given to save the dying race.

The beings of this planet didn't have the right to complain if he were to take it away.

'It's a bit childish to give something and then take it back, but what else can I do... Anyway, where do I even start?'

The Nerpa frowned.

A chaotic planet.

The only toy he had was a fleet, which had a few ships he couldn't even use anymore—their engines had overloaded when he destroyed the crystal.

Although this was more than enough to destroy countless cities and shake an entire nation, that was not enough to go against his enemies.

According to N-Aroel's memories, his enemies had built their entire civilization from the <Flame>.

They would struggle with every last ounce of their strength to not lose the Flame, which meant that he would have to go against the entire planet.

'It would've been easier if I had the Nelkipa... tsk.'

He missed his stolen body and Nelkipa at this point.

With the Nelkipa, he could easily erase their entire civilization within a day and take over Ankara.

At least he had stopped Melchizedek and the aliens from taking it over.

'The fastest way to control the Flame is acquiring the controller.'

If he could take the three controllers spread around the planet, then he would be able to control the Flame as a whole.

Game over.

Although he didn't have his blue armor or his powerful body, the power to control the Flame was embedded deep inside his soul.

He would gain the chance to stand up again.

‘It seems our savior has failed... I must at least try to save our fallen race.’

The Nerpa thought back to the man who’d left with a heavy burden on his shoulders.

.....

While the Nerpa was heading towards Angkara.

Hansoo was also heading towards his destination.

—boom!—

Hansoo smacked away another Abyssal monster and then chuckled at the aura he could feel around him.

‘What to do...’

He couldn’t see them because they were so far away, but he could clearly feel them.

The people who were watching him from the distance.

Despite seeing his group for the first time and to still maintain their distance like that, it meant that they knew about Transcendents and how strong they were.

‘They’re used to Transcendents.’

He could also deduce another thing.

That the Transcendents inside here were around the 3-Star level.

If they felt that Hansoo’s power was that of a 2-Star Transcendent, then they wouldn’t be keeping such a long distance from them.

‘At least a 3-Star... hmm.’

He didn’t know how many there were, but they weren’t weaklings.

As Hansoo looked into the distance—

—kuoooo!—

—an aura quickly approached them from the far distance.

And Kiriel said softly to Hansoo as she felt this: “Not quite gentle, huh?”

“Right.”

The being was approaching them at an incredible speed.

Although the vehicles of Reunion were easily moving at a speed above 300 km per hour even without the Flame, the mysterious Transcendent easily left those vehicles in the dust as they approached Hansoo’s group.

The meteor-like being crossed multiple kilometers in an instant and soon arrived before them.

—boom!—

The man smiled as he looked at Hansoo and said in greeting: “Long time no see, Mr. Hansoo. I’m called John Stone.”

‘...Who? I’ve never seen him before.’

Hansoo was confused.

But John Stone whistled as he looked at Hansoo.

‘The world really got much better, huh?’

Hansoo was a being who was so powerful that he couldn’t even imagine his strength in the past.

With a power so overbearing that being on the same floor as him was unbelievable.

He shone even more because he used that strength to fight at the very front lines.

Achieving things nobody could even dream of.

Back then, he’d thought that Hansoo was mankind’s savior.

Until he turned the world upside down and disappeared two

years ago.

‘Well, I’ve gotten much stronger thanks to you.’

He’d managed to quickly rise up to the 6th Zone and gained a tremendous amount of strength.

Although Hansoo was stronger than him, he was still confident.

Intel was more important than strength.

The reason why Hansoo had been able to lead them was not just because of his strength, but mainly because he knew what to do.

But not anymore.

He wouldn’t know anything since he’d just come up.

It wasn’t Hansoo that was setting up the playing field anymore but him instead.

‘Good. Good.’

“Do you know what’s going on around here?”

Hansoo chuckled as he looked at the confident John Stone.

‘I can already guess where your confidence comes from, but... things won’t play out the way you want.’

Information was important indeed.

If he was going to speak on his own, then there was no reason to refuse.

John Stone giggled as he said:

“You wouldn’t. If you did... you wouldn’t be this carefree after knowing that the man you raised has already betrayed you...”

‘Heheh.’

John Stone smiled.

.....

‘Tsk. I knew this would happen. They’re already swarming

around them.'

The Nerpa was at a loss as he looked at the data from inside the Kalkuroun Fleet.

They had left behind three controllers.

But flies had already gathered around two of them.

Especially large flies.

'One... is the Neropa Union. Another is the Pompeion Empire... I see.'

He'd been initially surprised because the technology should've been beyond their comprehension, but it looks like they'd solved a part of it.

That was probably the reason why the two forces had been able to crush all others.

Because they had a secret weapon that the others didn't.

'I guess this fleet would be nowhere enough.'

The Nerpa pondered for a moment and then changed his destination.

'The last one should be easy. The flies around it seem weak enough.'

—ooooong—

The fleet started to move again.

Towards the Reyunion's territory.

The Flameless Land.

Chapter 390: Flameless Land (4)

“A betrayal.”

John Stone chuckled at Hansoo’s words.

“Yeah. He’s playing at being friends with the people of this place. Even though I’ve been trying to persuade him to work for our kind.”

John Stone pointed to the area behind him.

“Here are a few of my forces. I built them after everyone else left. Ah, they’re coming now.”

From the direction that John Stone pointed at— —rumble—
—a few armed vehicles, running on ancient fuel, were making loud noises and emitting black smoke as they approached Hansoo’s group.

Despite using ancient fuels, the technology used to create them was very advanced, so they moved at swift speed. Soon, the vehicles had reached their party.

...brrr...

Dozens of vehicles stopped by Hansoo and John Stone as hundreds of people started to disembark from the vehicles.

People with ancient weapons.

And John Stone waved to them with a laugh.

“Haha. You came?”

“... I don’t even know how you found out.”

John Stone chuckled at Erunheim’s words.

“My own race came up, so how could I ignore them? I should be the first to greet them.”

Although the word ‘race’ was a bit awkward...

It was the correct term to use in the current situation since they were messing around with another race all while jumping around multiple dimensions.

John Stone smiled.

And Erunheim frowned at this sight.

‘What a snake...’

Despite their scouts’ extreme wariness of the alien’s territory, a few of them had been kidnapped from time to time.

She had been wondering about these incidents, but it seems that her worries weren’t unprecedented.

Otherwise, it would be impossible for John Stone and the other aliens to find this exact location in the vast territory of Reyunion.

John Stone looked at Erunheim’s expression in contentment and then looked at Hansoo again.

‘With him here... he’d be of great assistance.’

Although he acted proudly before Erunheim’s forces, Sangjin was someone he couldn’t even dream of going against.

As well as any others on the same level as Sangjin.

Even if he got the crystal that could suppress the Flame, what good would that be against his own race?

Yes, it would make it easier for him to go against the Neropa Union or the Pompeion Empire, but he needed a different kind of strength to go against another Transcendent.

‘I can’t go up anyway, so... I need to make this place my own land.’

Going up would be a stretch.

He needed to figure out a way to make this place, the 6th Zone, his home.

An unshakable home of this own.

Of course, some might think of John Stone as weird.

They could go up at any time through the elevator, but there was a reason that they were sticking around the Neropa Union and the Pompeion Empire.

They could just hunt around here for a bit and then go up.

But no.

The road upwards had long been blocked.

‘Damned bastards...’

John Stone frowned as he thought of the final words of those who’d gone up to the 7th Zone.

<I agree that you’ve been quite the fox. Even with such chaos, you figured out the situation and made it all the way up here this fast. But this is it. There’s a place in life for everyone. This is as far as you can go by yourself. Rot here for eternity. Don’t think about getting more than what you’re capable of.> Although it annoyed him, their words were correct, and he did agree with them.

He’d climbed up here wanting to become the best, but there was always a higher mountain.

The people who had gone up had formed an alliance to crush anyone who tried to go up after them.

It was too dangerous for him to go through them.

Of course, why would he need to go?

He could just get the crystal and take over the 6th Zone.

It wouldn’t be impossible if he had the crystal—he could use it to deal with those weak to the crystal, and then use strength to deal with everyone else.

‘And this person... would be of great help in dealing with them.’

The more shields he had, the better.

He had to drag Hansoo over to his side no matter what.

John Stone thought of Sangjin as he spoke to Hansoo.

“Sangjin gave up on going up and allied with another nation. Despite me telling him to stay here and help the people coming up after.”

John Stone pointed to the people behind him.

It wasn't a lie.

These people had barely succeeded in coming up from below.

Although a lot of survivors were spread around the continent and throughout the entire 6th Zone, these were the people who had decided to stay and increase their strength.

This was a safe place to raise their strength, and they also had the people of Reunion working as their slaves.

‘Not bad at all.’

He was the leader here and could provide Hansoo with everything he wanted or desired.

And this man was someone who struggled to save mankind.

There would be no reason for him to collide against Reunion, a place made to protect their kind.

John Stone continued to speak.

“But it's really not easy. The people who originally lived here continue to crawl back out of curiosity... Everyone who had the strength to help left on their own. We need someone as strong as you. Stay with us.”

Hansoo didn't reply to that question, but rather asked another question: “I'm curious about something else. So he left for another nation?”

John Stone nodded.

“Yes, the Pompeion Nation.”

“Hmm.”

The expressions of Erunheim and the other people of Reunion turned dark.

John Stone continued to speak as he observed the looks on their faces.

“I don’t know where he is or what he’s doing—we’re struggling this hard, but he ran off alone.”

“Struggle?”

John Stone nodded again.

“Yeah, we’re trying to dig something up.”

‘I can’t hide that thing anyway.’

Even if he tried to hide it, the noisy people around him would spill the details in the end.

About the powers of the crystal.

If that was the case, it was better to drag this guy in and quickly finish the job.

Since the job would become much easier with Hansoo’s help.

‘He wouldn’t try to force things anyway.’

John Stone thought of the stories he’d heard about the Hansoo of the past.

And Hansoo only sighed inwardly as he looked at John Stone.

‘...Are there only people like him left around here?’

He’d figured out that something had happened because of the lack of aggression up here.

But this was too much of a disappointment.

This was the limit of people surrounding the core location, the elevator.

Of course, the man before him had gathered some forces.

A few 3-Star Transcendents were present, and there were quite a

lot of people from Reunion as well.

If he could absorb all this strength, it would be quite useful.

But this was not what he expected.

Hansoo looked around.

‘What the hell have you done up until now?’

This was nowhere close to what he’d anticipated.

He had hoped that stronger people would’ve been around here.

Even if they were fighting.

But there was nothing here.

Clementine’s forces had long left this place.

And his old comrades had left too.

But this place was a strategic point.

If they hadn’t chosen to protect this location, there would be a reason for that.

A reason that forced them to leave.

‘It seems the place up there has truly become chaotic... I need to deal with these kids first.,’

Hansoo looked at the man who was standing before him without a single shred of fear.

It seemed that John thought his words had sounded enticing and was feeling confident about his offer, but that was not the case.

Hansoo really wasn’t feeling so great right now.

Then—

‘What the hell?’

—as he looked at Hansoo’s eyes...

John Stone felt a sense of danger as he slowly backed away.

.....

—rumble—

The top of a giant tower that rose up to the clouds.

A beautiful terrace was located at the top of this tower.

—chiiiing—

Inside the translucent barrier that blocked the powerful winds from outside.

A man sat as he looked at the scenery below.

“A good sight.”

—rumble—

The man looked down as he mumbled.

The hundreds of ships that covered the sky.

The countless skyscrapers that filled the space between them.

And the light of the <Flame> that fueled all of these things, visible between the valleys of the continents.

Within the entire planet of Angkara, there was only one man who could look down at all of this.

The Emperor.

The epitome of authority within the Pompeion Empire.

The man who controlled the <Dragona>, the army of twelve fleets and countless Dragon God Soldiers, which shook half of the world.

And inside the terrace where only the Emperor was permitted, a few others were standing.

Three men and two women.

But one man stood out.

Because while two of the men and the two women radiated a violet aura, only one man radiated a natural color.

Showing that he was truly alive.

Emperor Pompeion spoke to that man.

Towards the man who held a heavy atmosphere.

“I thank you again for your efforts. And also... don't you miss your old comrades?”

At Pompeion's curious words—

—the man, Sangjin, spoke with a heavy tone: “...No. The situation has changed after all.”

Pompeion nodded.

“Right. You're already quite burdened with your current duties. But... I hope you can try a bit harder. That is the only way for you to acquire what you desire. And what I desire.”

Sangjin nodded.

Chapter 391: Flameless Land (5)

“What happened?”

“That...”

As John Stone flinched at the overbearing aura that Hansoo was emitting— —Erunheim replied besides them.

“Are you talking about Clementine’s forces?”

“I don’t care who. Why are there only these guys here?”

A lot of thoughts flashed through Erunheim’s head at his words.

‘...Is this man not interested in John Stone at all?’

It seemed like this man was quite a powerful person.

Even John Stone, who was always acting so proud and cocky, was staying silent due to the aura Hansoo was emitting.

Which meant that this man was much more powerful than what they’d expected.

They had thought that he would be weaker than John Stone because he had just come up from below, but it seems their predictions had been wrong.

Which meant that they had to take advantage of this situation.

‘How can I convince him to help us...?’

They needed someone to go against John Stone, so she was worried that they might join forces.

John Stone alone was hard enough, but if someone who even John Stone was afraid of joined forces with him, then they would lose all hope.

But it seems John Stone and Hansoo weren’t at all friendly with each other.

They needed to turn the situation in their favor.

“It’s a long story. Why don’t we—”

As Erunheim organized her thoughts and started to speak— —
Hansoo shook his head as he looked at her expression.

“There are too many foxes here.”

Ten.

—boom!—

A terrifying aura exploded out from Hansoo and suppressed their
entire surroundings.

“Ugh...”

“Huek!”

Erunheim and her guards all froze.

And John Stone made a defensive posture while groaning.

‘...So suddenly?’

And unlike what John Stone had feared—

—Hansoo just spoke to Kiriel behind him.

“Kiriel. I’ll leave it to you.”

“Yes.”

—ooooooooong—

Kiriel walked up to Erunheim and then placed her hands on her
forehead.

And soon—

—all the memories contained in Erunheim’s body started flowing
out and entering Kiriel’s head.

.....

‘This lady has lived a hard life as well.’

Kiriel thought as she continued to read through Erunheim’s
memories.

She sucked the fragmented memories of Erunheim after her escape to this place into her mind, reorganizing them to play through like a movie.

Escaping with the remaining forces of a nation destroyed by the Neropa Union and fleeing to this Flameless Land.

The monsters attacking from the insides of this place.

Joining the forces of Reyunion and meeting the aliens who lived in this place.

Kiriel knew that this was the most important part.

‘Let’s see. This was before the Abyss fell... Are those guys Clementine’s allies?’

Kiriel froze as she looked at the memory.

They didn’t seem like Clementine’s forces.

A few people shone within the memories of Erunheim.

<Hey, how long are we going to stay here? Let’s go up already. We’re ready.> <Yeah, Keldian is right. There’s not much we can do even if we stay here. And this place is too boring—we can’t even go out.> The handsome man called Keldian who was voicing his opinions.

The man who agreed with Keldian called Kangtae.

And a beautiful woman listening to their words with a serious expression.

‘Her name is... Eres? What a beauty.’

But there was someone who shone even more brightly than these people.

A man who was smiling from the back.

‘...I can’t see him clearly.’

The appearance of that man was very blurry for some reason.

It didn't seem like Erunheim had focused much attention on him.

Since this memory was showing that Keldian and the others wanted to leave.

<If you guys go up, then who will kill those monsters?> <Please tell us if our treatment was lacking.> The expressions of Erunheim and the leaders of Reyunion were grim.

They were in a very grim situation.

The Neropa Union terrorized them outside the Flameless Land.

But staying inside, they could not defeat the monsters without these people.

The expressions of Keldian and a few others froze at the naggings of these people, while Eres and a few others couldn't seem to ignore their pleas.

Of course.

The difficulty continued to rise as they went up.

And the issue of internal conflict existed.

Reyunion's main forces comprised of Eres's people— the others wanted to either kill off the people of Reyunion or turn them into slaves.

They just stayed silent because Eres was too powerful.

But if they all left, the people of Reyunion would all be reduced to become slaves.

And not only that.

If they blocked this place off, then those coming up after them would be in danger.

But to go up after leaving behind a few forces here, the situation above would be too grim.

But at that moment—

—someone spoke.

<Do not worry. We will stay.>

<I will stay as well>.

A few others spoke out to remain.

And Eres and the others decided to go up after leaving the rest to these people.

Erunheim's uneasiness was clearly palpable.

At the remaining forces who didn't seem powerful enough to deal with the monsters.

But fighting against their choices would only lead to their deaths.

So Erunheim and the other leaders stayed silent.

But the moment Eres and the others left, the situation changed.

Towards a completely different direction.

<Phew, it was so hard to keep acting.>

<Yeah... Why did Clementine tell us to do all this?> <It's because it looks suspicious if everyone going up is in the same group.>

<Hey! Gather up! They all left!>

And all the forces gathered under the two people who remained to protect them.

But of course, the peace didn't last long.

Everyone turned grim at the events that happened afterward.

<Organize your areas and gather to the central part! We have something to dig up!> And with those words, all the other aliens pretending to be in opposing forces all gathered to the center.

Of course, Reunion's territory had turned into a mess.

After all, rather than hunting the monsters all around them, the aliens had gathered in that place instead. There was nobody else to block the monsters.

Although they were able to hold on to some degree with their mechanical weapons, it did not solve the core issue.

After the deaths of tens of millions of people in Reunion, Erunheim and the others suppressed their fears and went to the aliens.

<Dammit! Didn't you promise to protect us?!> But then— —their cold expressions were still very clear within Erunheim's memories.

<What can you do for us?>

<...>

<Shut up and stay still. Be glad we didn't kill you off. We're just leaving you alone because it's annoying.> Erunheim clenched her teeth and backed off.

Their words were right.

Erunheim decided to be thankful that it hadn't ended in a massacre as she gathered up the other leaders of Reunion, quickly forming a defensive line to push back the monsters.

Thankfully, the forces of monsters had diminished quite a bit after the aliens hunted them down to increase their own strength.

Because they had struggled so hard to protect their territory, they had formed a decent line of defense.

Of course, it didn't last long.

Three months.

It only took three months for their world to be flipped upside down.

A strange elevator slammed down from the sky and onto the center of their territory.

And even more powerful monsters started to crawl out from that elevator.

If they could fight the previous monsters with mechanical

weapons.

Then only the power of the Flame could deal with these new monsters.

If the aliens hadn't been shocked at the sudden appearance of these monsters and hadn't immediately hunted them down, then all the remaining people in Reyunion would've been killed off within a month.

And everything continued to be chaotic after that.

New aliens continued to rise up.

And they had survived in the small gap created between the battles of the original aliens and the new aliens.

The past two years was chaos in itself.

But there was a force that shone even brighter than the others within those years.

The man who rose up quickly while Clementine's forces had been distracted.

The man who had become strong enough to push back Clementine's forces.

Kiriell exclaimed out loud after she finished with the memories of what Erunheim had gone through.

“Woah...!”

‘Amazing. Was that person Sangjin?’

Kiriell thought to herself, deducing the identity of the man, the enemy of John Stone.

In Erunheim's memories.

Clementine's forces were running away to the elevator.

But her expression turned grim.

She heard the final words of Clementine's forces as they left.

<Hahaha! We'll leave for now! We already know we won't be able to take this place! We'll wait for you in the 7th Zone!> 'They couldn't take it?'

Kiriel was at a loss.

Sangjin's forces had succeeded in pushing away Clementine's forces—why did they hand over this place to John Stone and then just leave?

.....

"Haa...Haa... I wonder what's going on above?"

A man looked up as he used the light from his reinforcement skill to get rid of the darkness around the small crystal.

—chiiiik—

'Making me feel uneasy...'

The man frowned at the strange sight of the darkness being tied down to a specific location.

If this darkness did not exist, he would have long taken away this crystal.

But this darkness was clinging onto the crystal.

Like they were holding it down so it wouldn't escape.

And the fact that the area outside the dark half-kilometer radius around the crystal was extremely bright.

"Stop spouting nonsense and focus on digging. It seems we've almost finished digging it out."

—chiiiik—

Just as that voice had said.

The shadows that were holding the crystal down had mostly been destroyed.

They just needed to take this crystal up.

‘John Stone will deal with it well.’

—chiiiiik—

The man focused on cutting apart the shadows again.

Chapter 392: Flameless Land (6)

Kiriell decided to go even deeper into the memory.

‘Let’s see what happened.’

Kiriell focused as she started to read the memory after Clementine’s forces had left.

.....

Erunheim’s memories continued.

After Clementine’s forces had gone up.

This place was at peace for a short while.

Sangjin had succeeded in controlling the territory of Reunion with his abilities.

And none of the Transcendents could do anything while he was there.

But one day.

After going into the place where Clementine’s forces had been digging at.

The peaceful days had ended.

<Gather up. There’s something we need to discuss.> At Sangjin’s words, all the aliens had gathered for a meeting.

Erunheim didn’t know about the contents of that meeting.

But one thing was clear.

Everything changed after that day.

<We will leave. We all have different opinions and... we need to respect that.> And Sangjin left after that.

Towards the Pompeion Empire to the south of Reunion’s territory.

And Erunheim couldn’t figure out the reason behind Sangjin’s

parting words.

After that meeting.

Some stayed.

Some went to the Pompeion Empire with Sangjin.

Some went to the Neropa Union.

Erunheim didn't know what they were all thinking, but one thing was clear.

They each had different plans and had decided to split up.

The Transcendents had all left.

And she never saw them again.

.....

'Mmm...This is how things happened? Mmm... I wondered how someone like this had taken over this place.'

—kiiiiing—

Kiriell nodded as she returned from the memories.

Of course, John Stone wasn't weak in any sense.

John Stone was by far the strongest out of everyone who had decided to stay, and he was a decent leader.

If not, he wouldn't have been able to reach this level.

After all, Kiriell didn't have any confidence that she could beat John Stone in a fight.

'He's strong... He's strong indeed.'

Kiriell mumbled as she looked at the aura John Stone was radiating.

He was strong.

Although they were all at the 3-Star level, John Stone had stayed here and continued to increase his strength after all.

Of course, he was still lacking in comparison to those who had left.

From Erunheim's memories, there were at least twenty people who looked stronger than John Stone right now.

And this was only what Erunheim saw.

If they hadn't all left, John Stone would've never been able to take over this place.

"...That is what happened."

"Ugh..."

John Stone gritted his teeth at Kiriel who bluntly explained everything she saw to Hansoo.

It was all true, but it made him seem very incompetent.

'Damned b****...'

Who was it that prettied up this place like this?

Of course, Hansoo didn't care for John Stone's thoughts as he made his decision.

'I should go check inside.'

The thing that Clementine's forces had wanted to dig out was definitely the controller he was looking for.

The object that was the reason this place was called the Flameless Land.

But there was something strange.

Two years was not a short time.

No matter how well-hidden the External Flame Divine Tool, or whether other things had gotten in their way of digging it out, two years was more than enough time to accomplish their goals.

But Clementine's forces had relinquished it and gone up instead.

And an even stranger thing was Sangjin and the other people's

actions.

Sangjin had checked the insides and had left afterwards.

There was a reason for this.

And he needed to check it out.

“Which direction?”

“This way.”

As Hansoo looked to the direction Kiriel pointed to— —John Stone knew instinctively.

That these people were aiming for the same thing as him.

These guys shouldn't know anything since they'd just come up, but every single one of John Stone's instinct was crying out in danger.

He sensed it.

That these people were going for the object hidden deep within this place.

The object that was supposed to be his.

“No!”

—booom!—

John Stone's aura exploded outwards along with a shout.

His entire body burned up in dark red flames.

‘No! Do you know how much I've struggled for that?!’

Flames spewed out from John Stone's eyes.

John Stone's trait.

Berserk Mode.

It was a very simple trait, but there was nothing as good as a trait like this when it came to a battle.

A rage that burned the second he felt danger from his opponent.

It was similar to Enbi Arin's Tainted Emotion, but there were clear differences.

Unlike Enbi Arin's trait, which only raised two stats depending on the emotion, John Stone's trait increased all his stats through either rage or fear.

The downside was... his decision-making skills and sanity became very clouded.

‘No!’

As his Berserk Mode activated—

—the fear he felt towards Hansoo started to wash away.

And rage replaced it all.

“Kuaaaaap!”

—whoooosh!—

The giant axe on John Stone's back rose up along with his Berserk Mode.

The monster that appeared on the 6th Zone.

An axe created from a monster that was famous for its hard exoskeleton, the Atantael.

The blade was created by sharpening its exoskeleton and its handle was made from its bones.

The axe, which played a huge part in helping John Stone rise up to his current position, flew towards Hansoo's neck.

—swooooosh!—

Kiriel looked at the axe and thought to herself: ‘...Brute.’

Her trait, Psychometry, was amazing in a sense that it allowed her to quickly become stronger and gave her a lot of answers.

But it was still lacking in a battle.

In the end, she felt that it would be difficult for her to deal with

this brute currently charging towards Hansoo.

But Kiriel just looked around in boredom.

‘I guess everyone has their own job.’

She just needed to do her own.

But Hansoo acted outside her expectations.

The moment Hansoo saw John Stone charging towards him, he spoke to Kiriel.

“Let’s go.”

“Huh?”

‘You aren’t going to kill him off?’

Kiriel was confused, but her actions were still very quick.

Even before the axe got anywhere close to them.

—kiiiing!—

Clouds appeared from Kiriel’s body and covered their bodies.

Then—

—whooooosh!—

—the axe started to cut apart the clouds.

“Hahahahaha...hah?”

John Stone’s expression turned dark as he cut through the clouds.

‘I don’t feel like anything got cut...?’

And then—

—John Stone focused on the insides of the cloud where Hansoo and the woman should’ve been at.

“What the... Where did they go? Uaaaahh!”

John Stone, who was still in his Berserk Mode, shouted in rage as he looked at the empty land before him.

.....

—charrrrrk—

Above the depths.

White clouds started to appear above the hole.

Then—

—whooosh—

The clouds disappeared, revealing the figures of Hansoo and Kiriel.

“Nice... We really arrived!”

Kiriel exclaimed out loud at her newly learned skill.

She had read about the skill’s explanations but using it was a whole other sensation.

The depths that she’d seen in Erunheim’s memories was in front of them.

Hansoo asked Kiriel:

“How are you?”

He was asking about her status.

Kiriel looked at her body and replied:

“There seems to be a lot of limitations. It drains a lot of my stamina and... I don’t think we can use it as a means of escape.”

A new skill.

<Cloudy Movement>.

She realized after using it.

One could move with no restrictions to distance, and once the skill was activated, they would become untargetable until it ended.

But there were a lot of limitations.

The biggest one was the user’s beliefs during a battle.

If one used the skill because they decided they couldn't win in the battle, then the skill would not activate.

It only activated because she believed Hansoo could still win.

If she were alone, the skill would've never activated.

'What a petty fairy. Should at least allow me to run away with it.'

Of course, running away wasn't the best option, but knowing that one had a means of escape would allow them to fight with more confidence.

But Hansoo chuckled.

"Well, it has a good synergy with your trait."

"...Right."

Kiriel nodded.

Cloudy Movement.

<Moving anywhere within one's memories.> This meant that to Kiriel, who could read memories, it had a great deal of synergy.

She had brought herself and Hansoo here using the memories of Erunheim.

'It'll be very useful.'

Kiriel then asked Hansoo:

"Anyway, why did you want to come here right away?"

'Instead of beating him.'

Kiriel didn't voice her whole opinion.

It made her sound too blunt.

Hansoo looked down into the depths and said: "I felt like we needed to come here quickly."

When he heard the memories that Kiriel read...

Hansoo felt that something was amiss.

A feeling that urged him to hurry.

If he had engaged in battle, then he would've had to fight John Stone and everyone else who followed afterward.

‘It...It doesn't feel quite right.’

And he realized it as he looked down.

As to what was making him feel this uneasy.

The darkness that had almost separated from the crystal.

The adventurers who had been cutting away the darkness then shouted at Hansoo.

“Huh? Who are you guys?”

“This place is off-limits?”

Hansoo looked around the crystal, the people around it and then turned towards Kiriel.

“Let's go in.”

“Yes.”

His goal was right before his eyes.

These brats weren't his opponents at all.

After speaking to Kiriel, Hansoo jumped into the depths.

Towards the crystal that was being tied down by the darkness.

Chapter 393: Owner of the crystal (1)

—whooooosh!—

Just as Hansoo arrived—

—chaos occurred beneath.

“Who are you?”

—tatatatatak!—

A few people quickly approached them and asked.

And Hansoo replied:

“John Stone sent us. To see the progress.”

There was no need to fight unnecessary fights.

He only needed to figure out the situation down here.

And more than anything else...

‘Feels like I shouldn’t fight in there.’

—SSSSS—

Hansoo thought as he looked at the strange darkness.

He didn’t know if it was because of the controller or because of something else, but it was hard to see inside the darkness.

He would be able to check after he went in there but causing a wreck here didn’t seem like the best option.

Hansoo decided to trust in his instincts from his years in the Abyss and just scout things out.

“Let’s hurry up and go down. We need to check on the crystal.”

“...Sure?”

The doubtful expressions on the other people remained as they started to move downwards.

“Come.”

—whooooosh!—

Hansoo and a few other Transcendents started to make their way down.

But they didn't go all the way down.

—tatatak!—

The Transcendents stopped part way through to tie themselves onto their original posts, cutting away at the darkness again. They said: "We'll remain here and finish up our job, so go down and speak to Ban Gipson. The crystal is under his jurisdiction."

And with those words—

—whooooosh!—

—Hansoo and Kiriel quickly descended away from the others.

While dropping down, they passed by quite a large number of Transcendents.

Every single one of them had tied themselves onto a part of the wall and were cutting away at the darkness.

—clang!—

—kacha!—

Not a single normal adventurer was among them.

All these Transcendents were using their respective reinforcements and skills to cut away the darkness.

But the darkness was so durable and strong that they barely made a dent despite the countless attacks.

"Damn..."

One Transcendent gathered his strength and slammed down onto a long strand of darkness.

—boom!—

The thin strand of darkness snapped.

—kuooooong!—

The strand of darkness made a strange sound as it squirmed violently.

Not only the snapped strand, but every single bit of darkness around it as well.

And every time that strand moved, the darkness that squirmed along with it threatened the light around them.

The expressions of the the Transcendents turned dark.

It was a sight that was hard to get used to no matter how many times they witnessed it.

These damned strands were already hard to cut off, but even after being cut, they still caused a scene like this.

But they could not stop.

Since they all knew how John Stone would treat them if they stopped.

John Stone was a good leader, but once angered, it was very hard to restrain him.

‘Ugh, I hope he doesn’t get angry.’

A few people trembled at this thought and continued to cut away at the darkness.

And Kiriel looked at these people with an uncomfortable expression.

“This... This place feels a bit murky, right?”

The darkness around them was crying out in alarm.

The 1 and 2-Star Transcendents didn’t seem like they could feel it, but...

She, a 3-Star Transcendent, could feel it clearly.

Something that seeped out from the dark depths—something

that made her feel uncomfortable.

‘I don’t really want to touch any of this.’

Kiriell debated whether to put her hand into the darkness, but realized that they were quickly approaching the floor and prepared to land.

—tatak!—

Hansoo and Kiriell landed lightly on the floor.

And before their eyes—

—boom!—

—they saw a few people in the middle of working, all letting out an aura that was countless times stronger than that of the people they had seen on the way down.

—tonk! tonk!—

The strands of darkness that 1 and 2-Star Transcendents took countless hits to snap—the people were cutting them away with each swing of their weapons.

Of course, they weren’t cutting away multiple strands per swing but thinking about how strong the strands were, they were significantly faster.

But their eyes were clearly drawn to something else.

A tiny crystal.

The tiny crystal that was shining brightly amidst the darkness drew Kiriell’s attention.

‘The strands... They’re all attracted to this place, right?’

The strands of darkness were all gathering onto the crystal.

And this is what Clementine and Sangjin had probably seen.

The item that Hansoo was also looking for.

‘Well, this was easier than I expected.’

He looked around at the people working calmly and then started to walk in.

He felt like he needed to check the crystal first before looking at the darkness around it.

But at that moment—

“A cockroach crawled in.”

—a man chuckled as he looked at Kiriel and Hansoo.

Hansoo looked at the man and said:

“John Stone sent us. We’ve confirmed it above already.”

The man continued to chuckle.

“That’s so you guys won’t run away, you dumb bastards.”

The ones above hadn’t sent them in because they were stupid.

They already knew that these people were trespassers.

But there was a reason why they had let these two pass.

So that they wouldn’t run away.

‘Heheheh.’

He didn’t know everyone under John Stone.

But he knew one thing.

The people who could come down here were a limited few.

John Stone made it hard for anyone he didn’t trust to even approach that precious item.

This had caused this project to slow down quite a bit, but it did have a lot of advantages as well.

Since they would know the moment someone tried to trespass.

“There’s always people like you. Curious for what’s going on inside and crawling inside... Well, it’s good for us.”

He was used to this.

There were always countless cockroaches around.

They actually liked those kinds of people.

This was one of the few methods of stress relief for those who spent all day digging these mysterious strands of darkness.

“Let's start by... beating you halfway to death first.”

As the man mumbled—

—boooooom!—

—countless skills started flying towards the two from the darkness.

.....

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

The darkness started to brighten up from the countless skills.

And Kiriel frowned as she blocked away the attacks with her fang.

‘Easy.’

Every single one of them were Transcendents.

Most were 1-Stars or 2-Stars, but there were some who stood out more than the others.

They were either slightly weaker than her or even on the same level as her.

Meaning that they were at the 3-Star level.

—rumble!—

Although they aimed most of their attacks at Hansoo, there were a few flying her way as well.

‘Look at that bastard.’

—tonk!—

Kiriell deflected an attack that flung her back, grasping her injured wrist as she looked at the man sending skills flying her way.

A man who smiled maniacally as he focused all his attacks on her. He was only aiming for her, all while scanning her face and body. Ignoring Hansoo completely.

Kiriell frowned as she swung her fang.

—whooosh!—

Red clouds started pouring out from Hansoo's body.

'End this quickly.'

The red clouds covered the dark area and expanded at a tremendous speed.

"Ahh... uaaaahhh! What is this?!"

"Kuaaaap!"

Screams echoed out from all directions.

'Wha—what the hell is this!?'

The man, Ban Gipson, screamed inwardly as he looked at the red clouds that was gnawing away at his body.

Reinforcement, mana, and weapon.

The red smoke devoured everything.

And the ones who rolled around the floor screaming only lasted for a bit before they fell silent.

The only ones remaining were himself and four other 3-Star Transcendents.

And towards them—

—whooooosh!—

—the terrifying sound of something approaching echoed forth.

‘F***!’

Even before Ban Gipson could fully respond—

—boooooom!—

—a large hammer flew and slammed into Ban Gipson.

“Kuaa...aaaap!”

—boom!—

The Transcendents looked at Ban Gipson who had been sent flying and flinched.

Ban Gipson was their leader.

Although there was only a tiny gap of difference in terms of strength, he was still the strongest out of all of them.

And for such a person to be sent away from a single strike.

‘Even John Stone isn’t that strong...’

But one of the men looked at Hansoo as his expression turned into one of disbelief.

A very familiar face was visible between the blue armor.

“What the... Kang Hansoo!”

And everyone else flinched as they heard the man’s shout.

Why bring up that name here?

Hansoo ignored them as he continued to walk forwards, saying to Kiriel.

“This doesn’t feel quite right. I’ll deal with them so read the memories here.”

Kiriel nodded.

As they started fighting, the darkness started to tremble.

As if something was trying to wake up from the external stimulus they were causing.

“Dammit... Arrgh!”

“Haa!”

Leaving the three Transcendents and Hansoo behind, she quickly started to read the memories.

And soon—

—the memories of the area around the crystal swiftly entered her mind.

From the moment Clementine’s forces found the crystal.

To when Sangjin had entered here.

And from when John Stone started to work on this place and reached this point.

Soon—

“Damn...”

—Kiriel gulped as she looked around.

At the darkness surrounding her.

‘It’s not that they chose not to take it, it’s just that... they couldn’t.’

It was weird indeed.

If people like Sangjin and John Stone were to create their own forces.

Then Clementine’s forces, who should’ve been waiting for such people, should be extremely busy instead.

Since that was the only way for them to become stronger while being hidden from the eyes of Clementine.

Which meant that there was something that could distract Clementine’s forces.

She had been confused because the land above looked way too peaceful, but it seems the answer was here.

‘They’re all... sleeping here.’

The darkness around her.

It was an Abyssal race.

The real culprit that had forced Clementine’s forces to leave this place and go up.

‘Crazy bastards... They’re waking up a monster that’s sleeping in peace.’

Kiriel thought of John Stone’s forces that were cutting away the sleeping monster’s tentacles, her expression utterly horrified.

Chapter 394: Owner of the crystal (2)

—boooooom!—

“Ahhhh!”

“Damn! Buy time! John Stone will be here soon!”

While the three Transcendents were battling Hansoo— —the memories surrounding the crystal entered through Kiriel’s hand and into her head.

‘What the hell is going on?’

Kiriel gulped.

This darkness did not exist until Clementine’s forces had found this place.

But the moment the Abyss fell, and the elevator appeared, things had changed.

The mysterious creature that came out from the elevator.

With appearances that resembled bears and lions.

Strange creatures continued to flood out.

Towards this crystal.

And Kiriel knew what had happened from that point.

Kill or be killed.

The people of Reyunion, who couldn’t even defend against basic monsters, were simply massacred, and the powerful forces of Clementine died as well.

‘I wonder where they went...?’

The powerful forces that Erunheim had seen in her memories had all disappeared.

Kiriel had thought that Clementine and Sangjin had succeeded in killing off all the Abyssal monsters but that was not the case.

‘They... didn’t succeed.’

It wasn’t that they had succeeded in killing them off.

The Transcendents had all disappeared because they had failed.

The monsters that came out from the elevator had long accomplished their goals.

Clementine’s forces had fallen back, and so they had given this place up, leaving it for Sangjin and the others.

—SSSS—

Kiriél stopped reading the memories and looked around.

Pure darkness.

The countless strands of darkness that reached out and tied down the crystal.

Kiriél gulped as she extended her hands into the darkness.

—pff—

She felt an obstruction.

It felt just like a wall, a black wall.

A wall with strange strands extending out from it.

But to Kiriél, who could read memories, it was different.

She knew what was going on in here.

‘The ones alive are... seven.’

—SSSS—

The memories within the darkness started to enter her mind.

The ones that had survived the journey up to this point were only seven.

Of course, despite their low numbers, they were extremely strong.

After all, they had charged through all the Transcendents that

had stood in their way.

But after reaching this place, they seemed to be quite tired from their efforts.

After smelling the crystal a few times, they smiled contentedly and touched the nearby walls.

But at that moment, the walls started to get dyed with a dark color.

And with that as the beginning, the area surrounding the crystal turned dark.

A color that one couldn't simply describe with the word 'dark'.

'But... this isn't the original color.'

Kiriel thought of the colors of the walls as they descended down here.

In any case, the memory continued.

As the walls turned dark—

—rumble—

—the beings suddenly entered the wall.

Like a human entering a body of water.

With a carefree attitude.

And then—

—shshshshshshsh!—

—thousands of strands of shadows extended out and secured the crystal.

And as she saw up to this point—

—she felt a hand on her shoulder.

“What happened here?”

“Mmm...”

As she turned around, she saw Hansoo who had already cleaned up the area.

It seems he had finished up while she was reading the memories.

The cracks on the blue armor showed it.

Kiriell looked at the blue armor in a daze and then woke up to reply to Hansoo.

‘But... what do I tell him?’

Kiriell wondered whether Hansoo even knew about the mysterious creatures, but in the end she told him everything she had seen.

She believed in his mystical ‘psychic abilities’.

“...So they entered the darkness and the strands extended out onto the crystals. The issue here is that most of them have been cut off.”

As Kiriell finished her words—

—Hansoo’s expression froze.

And he quickly made a decision.

“Give up the crystal. Leave immediately.”

“Huh? Wasn’t this extremely important?”

Hansoo shook his head.

“It is. But we can’t touch it anymore.”

‘We need to go somewhere else first. I now know why Clementine’s forces and Sanjin gave this up.’

It was a wise choice to do so.

Unlike the stupid actions of John Stone.

‘I need to clean this place up before we leave...’

Hansoo looked at the remaining strands and the crystal as he spoke.

“Kiriel, stay and protect this place. We cannot let anyone take the crystal.”

“Huh? What about you?”

Hansoo looked up and muttered:

“The ones who might cause a catastrophe... I need to pull them out by the roots.”

—boooooom!—

With a loud bang, Hansoo’s body quickly ascended through the hole.

.....

“Ugh... Hurry! We need to stop them before they get the crystal!”

John Stone gritted his teeth.

Such horrible timing for a thief to appear.

He’d worked too hard.

If he’d been slightly more laid back in dealing with the strands, he wouldn’t feel so pressured to rush over there.

But sadly, he and his underlings had taken turns day and night and had almost cut off all the strands from the crystal.

The remainder was more than enough for Hansoo to cut off by himself.

‘No... That thief! I was so close!’

All his hard work...

He couldn’t let anyone take it.

“Hurry! Hurry up! All of you!”.

John Stone continued to scream.

Not only towards his underlings but to the people of Reunion as well, who’d armed themselves with their mechanical weapons.

And everyone frowned at these shouts.

John Stone saw this, but he didn't have time to care what they thought.

He didn't usually act this way.

No matter how strong he was, if he pushed them too hard, then he was bound to end up backstabbed.

Although he acted arrogantly, they wouldn't act out of place as long as he treated them well.

But this situation was different.

Because of his towering rage, his Trait—Berserk Mode—was continuously active.

But then—

—boooooom!—

—something rose up from the depths like a meteor and landed before them.

“Ugh...”

“Damn! Prepare for battle!”

Everyone's expressions turned grim at the terrifying aura of the being currently approaching them.

But John Stone's expression brightened up.

‘Kang Hansoo!’

John Stone was extremely glad that Hansoo wasn't by the crystal anymore and was here instead.

Due to this to his rage died down a bit, his sanity returning as he shouted at the man.

Of course, he wasn't entirely sane just yet.

“You bastard! How dare you?! Trying to take what's rightfully mine...”

“This is why I came here.”

“Huh?’

John Stone flinched at Hansoo’s words.

Hansoo ignored him as he continued to speak.

“It should be fine to leave you guys alone, but... you’ll probably cause a huge ruckus if I do.”

The people of Reunion couldn’t cut the strands even if they wanted to.

Only Transcendents could manage it, although just barely.

Without the Flame, they were as good as usual.

But John Stone was different.

He would do whatever he could to cut off the strands and take the crystal.

And he could not let that happen.

It was better to let those things stay asleep.

‘I’ll just drag them all away.’

—whooosh!—

Red clouds started to seep out from Hansoo’s body.

.....

—rumble!—

—boom! boom!—

Kiriel listened to the noises echoing from the far distance and looked around the darkness in curiosity.

‘...So, we can’t take the crystal.’

There was only one reason she could think of for why they couldn’t.

In case they might awaken the sleeping beings inside it.

Although it was weird that those beings had worked so hard to reach here just to sleep, but since that crystal was the sole reason for their slumber, it made a lot of sense not to touch it.

Of course, she had another question.

‘Can’t we just ignore them and take it?’

Kiriel thought as she looked around.

She knew that these things were strong.

Since they had gone through countless Transcendents to reach this place.

And they should’ve already recovered their strength after their long period of rest.

If that crystal was that amazing, couldn’t they just take it and use its strength to kill off those beings?

Even if the crystal didn’t help them in battle, it didn’t seem like it was impossible to go up against those beings.

But she only questioned this for a moment.

‘There’s probably a reason.’

Kiriel decided to stop questioning Hansoo’s choices and sat in front of the crystal.

There was probably a reason why everyone else had given up on the crystal as well.

‘I don’t think anyone’s going to come here anyway... Should I just go up and help?’

The sounds of explosions were lessening as well.

But as she was thinking—

“Huh? We meet again!”

—a familiar voice rang out from behind her.

‘What? There was another entrance in the back?’

Opposite to where she and Hansoo had entered, somebody was walking through the darkness and approaching her.

And as she turned to the familiar voice—

—her expression changed to a frown.

“You...?”

“Hmm, I didn’t expect to see you here. Well, thanks for what happened last time.”

“Why are you here?”

Kiriel looked with displeasure at N-Aroel who had walked out from the darkness.

N-Aroel, the Nerpa, shrugged his shoulders and answered.

“Mmm, I’ve come to find something I need.”

The Nerpa pointed towards the crystal that was floating in the darkness.

Chapter 395: Owner of the crystal (3)

—rumble—

The Pompeion Empire.

In a terrace high up in the clouds.

The emperor spoke to Sangjin with a worried expression.

“Is...Is the crystal inside that place really impossible to acquire?”

The emperor looked towards the territory of Reunion with a frown.

Of course.

The Pompeion Empire had taken over half of the planet with only one relic.

The same for the Neropa Union as well.

If they didn't have the relic as well, then they would've long been defeated.

But how sad was it that such a relic was lying around in some wasteland?

Although they couldn't use the <Flame> inside that place...

There were countless other methods to acquire it if they wanted.

For example, if he asked this man, Sangjin, then he would easily sweep that place up in a single day and bring it back.

‘What a pity... Such a pity...’

If he could acquire that, his plans would come to fruition much quicker.

Sanjin replied:

“Acquiring it isn't hard.”

“Hmm. Then—”

“But.”

Before the emperor could finish his words—

—Sangjin cut him off and spoke as he stared into the emperor’s eyes.

“I guarantee you this: you will lose more than you could even dare to imagine if you take that crystal out.”

“...You’re saying this despite knowing of my strength?”

The Emperor glanced below his terrace and mumbled.

The thousands of ships and his swarm of Dragon God Soldiers.

A force large enough to flip the entire world upside down a couple of times.

There were only a few people who could threaten him.

The Neropa Union?

Although they were going against him now, they were a joke.

They could not make him feel fear.

Sangjin continued to speak as he looked at the confident expression of the emperor.

“I know very clearly.”

‘About the things inside there as well.’

Sangjin thought of the crystal he had to give up.

.....

Kiriel frowned as she listened to N-Aroel’s words.

‘He came to take the crystal?’

N-Aroel, the Nerpa, ignored her reaction and looked at the crystal.

It was one of the controllers that the overseer had left so they could control the <Flame> with more ease.

‘It seems this will be easier than I expected.’

The Nerpa smiled as he thought of the scene he’d witnessed from above.

The other two crystals had so many forces around it that even he wouldn’t dare to approach it.

But this crystal only had one alien protecting it.

‘Time to finish this up.’

The Nerpa ignored Kiriel as he walked towards the Crystal.

And as he did this—

—ooooooooong—

—as if it were resonating with the Nerpa, the crystal started to make a strange noise.

Just as if it had found its missing half.

“Yes, yes. It has been a while.”

But as the Nerpa was about to touch the crystal— —pakakakakak!
—

—a huge crevice appeared between the Nerpa and the crystal.

If the Nerpa hadn’t pulled back his arm, then he would’ve lost his fingers.

“Hmm... Why are you interfering? When I’m just here to take back my own belongings?”

Kiriel, who had swung her fang to attack the Nerpa, smiled as she said: “Well, we need that as well.”

‘I’m also getting the strong feeling that the crystal should not be touched.’

Kiriel felt shivers running down her back.

She had protected this place because of Hansoo’s words.

But the moment N-Aroel tried to touch the crystal, tremors

wracked her entire body.

And she instinctively knew that she had to protect the crystal.

It was the key to holding down the mysterious beings inside the shadows.

The Nerpa sighed as he looked at Kiriel.

“I really didn’t want to fight since you helped me out once...”

His race did not enjoy fighting.

But they couldn’t ignore those who messed with them, right?

‘Although I don’t have my body...’

The Nerpa looked down at the body that his soul was now occupying.

A feeble body.

His powerful body that could even survive in space didn’t exist anymore.

But it didn’t matter.

Their powerful bodies were their pride but...

Their true pride was their souls that had a special and terrifying ability.

‘I’ll leave you alive.’

—rumble—

The Nerpa’s Soul situated within N-Aroel’s body started shaking intensely.

.....

“You f***ing baastaaard!”

The berserk John Stone swung his axe towards Hansoo.

—whooosh!—

The bright red axe continued to fly towards Hansoo.

And as Hansoo's armor turned bright—

—boooooom!—

—the axe and armor collided, making a huge noise.

—crackle!—

The axe's attack was so powerful that the blue armor cracked apart.

‘Damn!’

But John Stone didn't look pleased.

He frowned as he watched the armor regenerate, shouting: “You bastards! Hurry and attack him while I hold him down! Unless you wish to die!”

At those words—

—the other Transcendents who had been hesitating looked around them.

At the Transcendents rolling around the floor while surrounded by red clouds.

“Ahhhhhhh!”

“Uaaaaahhh!”

Countless Transcendents rolled around on the floor, screaming in pain.

Some were silent and trembled vigorously.

Some clutched at their necks as if they had drunk poison.

Every single person who had tried to fight Hansoo had turned out like this.

‘Dammit!... Dammit!’

John Stone freaked out as he looked at the people rolling around on the ground.

Feeling so terrified it suppressed his berserk mode to a degree.

But John Stone clenched his teeth and charged forward.

“Bastards! That’s a skill as well! Do you think he can use it forever?! There’s a time limit! Charge and kill him!”

John Stone shouted as he swung his axe.

And just like he said.

As red clouds enveloped his body—

—the surrounding area had turned into hell, but the reinforcements around Hansoo’s body had awakened.

The fact that he could actually damage Hansoo proved this.

If Hansoo had shrouded himself tightly and only focused on fighting him, then he wouldn’t even be able to stand right now.

Which meant that the area next to Hansoo was the safest place.

As John Stone charged in, the surrounding 3-Star Transcendents nodded and followed suit.

Although John Stone’s personality was nasty, he was their leader because he always fought on the frontlines.

Although his personality was nasty and he was arrogant, the fact that he fought on the frontlines was more than enough to make him their leader.

Since he always dove into the most dangerous place by himself.

But sadly.

Their current situation really wasn’t great.

—boom!—

“Uaaaaah!”

John Stone screamed as he looked at Hansoo smash the charging 3-Star Transcendents down onto the ground.

‘This—this monster!’

Every time he let out more clouds, the other Transcendents

rolled around in pain, and with every swing of his dragon-enforced hammer, the 3-Star Transcendents turned into pulps of flesh.

Weak points?

None.

He also had a terrifying amount of experience and battle sense.

Dodge when needed and charge when there's a gap.

He attacked when he had to and gave up bits of his flesh when he needed to.

Possessing tremendous power and terrifying skills.

Alongside his insanely overpowered armor, he had that mysterious but insanely powerful weapon.

‘Th—This damned bastard!’

John Stone seethed in rage as he stared at Hansoo who seemed to have learned how to massacre people from his mother's womb.

“You bastard! That crystal is our only hope! Who are you to stop us from taking it?! Ahhh!”

—boooom!—

John Stone cried out in rage as he continued to attack.

He'd learned many things as he climbed up.

He was strong.

But there were countless monsters in the world.

And those monsters had an appetite that was befitting of their power.

John Stone had felt this as he looked at Clementine's forces who treated everyone's lives as if they were nothing.

To not be killed by them, he needed to become strong as well.

At least to keep his underlings alive, he needed strength.

Strength to retaliate when attacked.

And the crystal was the only method he had to catch up to those running far ahead of him.

But who was Hansoo to come out of nowhere and stop him from taking this?

And he wasn't even trying to take it for himself either.

'Y—You bastard! If you won't let us take it, then at least take it yourself!'

John Stone mourned.

Just like in the past.

If Hansoo could stand before them with this strength.

If he was stopping them because he was going to do that.

He could understand.

But what was this?

John Stone cried out tears of blood as he looked at his underlings dying around him.

And Hansoo, who had turned everyone around him immobile, suddenly stopped.

"So, you had a hidden card, right?"

"...?"

As everyone looked at Hansoo mumbling strange words— —boom!—

—Hansoo disappeared towards the hole in the distance.

'Huh...Huh?'

John Stone was in disbelief.

He'd basically won the battle, why did he leave?

But as everyone was making confused expressions— —boooooom!

—
—alongside a terrifyingly loud sound of explosion— —a
tremendous earthquake resonated out from where the crystal lay
beneath the hole.

Chapter 396: Owner of the crystal (4)

—rumble—

“Seriously...cough...”

Kiriel, embedded on the wall, coughed up blood with a groan.

‘This damned world...’

The world was large, yes.

But strange beings continued to pop out one after another.

Even an ordinary-looking researcher was this powerful.

—crackle—

Kiriel stood herself up and checked her body.

‘I can still go on.’

Kiriel readied her fang again.

Towards the Nerpa approaching the crystal in the distance.

“Time for round two, right?”

—swoosh!—

“...I see.”

The Nerpa dodged another of Kiriel’s attacks and shook his head.

She should know the strength difference between them by now.

But she was still willing to fight him.

‘It looks like... I’ll need to deal with her properly to stop her from interfering.’

The Nerpa turned away from the crystal and faced Kiriel after deciding to deal with her completely.

And the Nerpa’s appearance was a bit different from the past.

Blazing light now spewed out of those ordinary eyes.

As if there was a body of light sitting inside N-Aroel.

The Nerpa smiled as he looked at Kiriel.

“Is this your first time seeing someone who has received the Flame’s blessings?”

As the Nerpa smiled—

—kiiiiing!—

—the bright eyes suddenly exploded with light and lit up their entire surroundings.

And with that, a powerful aura was released from the Nerpa’s body and flew towards Kiriel.

‘Damn!’

Kiriel clenched her teeth as she looked at the formless waves rushing towards her and then used <Cloudy Movement>.

Although she couldn’t use it to run away, she could still use it to continue fighting.

Cloudy Movement simply allowed the user to jump through space.

And as the white clouds seeped out from Kiriel’s body and covered her image—

—rumble!—

—the waves released by the Nerpa rushed past where Kiriel had just been standing at.

Although everything near the white cloud had disappeared, the Nerpa shrugged his shoulders as he looked at this scene.

‘Nimble.’

Kiriel’s body had long disappeared.

But the Nerpa merely refocused on the area behind himself.

The tremendous amount of energy inside the Nerpa’s body

solidified according to the Nerpa's will.

—booom!—

And a colorless wall appeared behind the Nerpa and blocked the fang slashing behind him.

“Eeeek!”.

And then, Kiriel was flung away onto a distant wall.

Like a leaf blown away in a storm.

The Nerpa chuckled as he looked at her.

“Absolute strength is enough on its own.”

It was just as he said.

There were no tricks or techniques that could go against absolute strength.

Such things were only reserved for weaklings.

Of course, the amount of energy Kiriel could control was far beyond what a normal creature could handle, but it was nowhere near enough to deal with himself.

The strength he wielded was the strength that supported this planet.

‘Well, it's only a small part, but still.’

This feeble body could not fully withstand his powerful soul.

So he needed to limit his strength to a large degree.

The Nerpa made an annoyed expression at his current body as he continued to walk towards the crystal.

Kiriel clenched her teeth as she looked at him.

She did not have the strength to stop him anymore.

The Nerpa didn't seem to be willing to kill Kiriel as he spoke with a smile.

“Don’t blame me so much. You’re also doing it for your own race, right? I’m in a similar situation so... please understand.”

Then—

—tktktktktk!—

—the Nerpa grasped the crystal and pulled on it.

—kachak!—

—kakakak!—

The powerful energy within N-Aroel’s body ripped off the countless strands of shadow.

Of course, the Nerpa should not have been able to rip it off this easily no matter how strong he was.

But the few remaining strands that had been almost cut off could not withstand the power of the planet that the Nerpa was controlling.

‘Good.’

The Nerpa looked at the crystal in his hand and then turned to Kiriel.

“Both our plans are important so... I wish for your success. I hope you wish for mine as well. Good luck.”

“Wh—What the hell do y—”

Leaving Kiriel behind, the Nerpa used the power of the Flame and quickly started moving outside.

Roaaaaaar!

And from the darkness—

—a terrifying scream resounded.

‘F***!’

The enraged screams started to fill up the space.

And Kiriel felt chills running down her entire back as she heard

this.

She knew they were strong but not to this extent.

Kiriel had barely managed to stand herself up—

—rumble!—

—when the shadowy walls began to collapse as something started crawling out from the inside.

‘Damn...’

Kiriel breathed in and activated her Cloudy Movement to escape.

.....

Roaaaaar!

The moment these screams echoed out—

“Ahhhh!”

“Kuahhk!”

—boom!—

—all the fleeing adventurers fell to the ground as the members of Reyunion that were on their respective vehicles lost consciousness and crashed into the others and onto nearby obstacles.

The Transcendents weren’t fine as well.

“Huk!”

The running Transcendents started to sway.

The vicious aura hidden behind the screams blurred their sanity and consciousness.

The only ones who had been able to withstand it were higher level 2-Star or 3-Star Transcendents.

But even they could not fully suppress their instincts’ autonomous reactions.

Their entire bodies started shivering, and they couldn’t take

another step forward.

They could not approach the location of the screams while still maintaining their sanity.

But as the other Transcendents stopped—
—there was only one person who maintained his speed.

John Stone.

‘What... the hell!?’

John Stone was at a loss as he chased after Hansoo.

It had been over a year since he had started living here.

But he had never seen or even heard about an existence that could make such a terrifying roar.

At that moment—
—someone appeared before his eyes.

Kang Hansoo.

And the woman who stood by his side.

He had come here to kill Hansoo.

But the moment he heard that scream, he could only ask questions.

“Wh—What is this? What the hell is going on?”

Hansoo replied as he maintained his gaze towards the hole.

“The sleeping beast has awoken.”

“Huh? Why so suddenly?”

Hansoo looked at John Stone and said:

“Because its food has been stolen.”

.....

There were a lot of strange monsters in the Abyss.

But there was one creature that was stranger than most.

<Haetara>.

It looked like the Haetae that resembled both a bear and a lion, so they had named themselves so.

There was one strange thing about this race.

That they didn't really care about devouring other organisms.

Most Abyssal races devoured other races to survive, reproduce, or evolve.

This meant that conflicts, killings, and devouring were very important actions to continue the prosperity of their own race.

The humans weren't any different.

They had to eat other races to continue surviving in the Abyss, and they could only become stronger by killing them.

But the Haetara were different.

They didn't care so much about eating other organisms.

There was a reason for this, of course.

For them to survive, reproduce or grow stronger, eating other races was not very important.

There was something else that was important to them.

<Energy>.

Powerful energy.

Pure and powerful energy was the source that maintained their survival and allowed them to grow stronger.

The Haetara that could not find a proper source of energy would become toys of other races and get killed off.

This was why they had developed the ability to create a space within the shadows to hide in.

Once they found a proper source of energy...

The Haetara could grow indefinitely.

Becoming as large as an entire mountain range.

With a strength that terrified the world, they could flip the world upside down.

In search of more food.

“And there... it is.”

Kuooooooooongg!

Hansoo muttered as he looked at the giant lion/elephant/bear-looking creature several kilometers tall that had risen out from the ground.

And John Stone looked at this scene in a daze.

‘What... the...’

A mountain range.

Mountains were rising out from the ground and were stretching.

While releasing the rage they felt for losing their food.

With an aura that declared their intent to destroy everything.

Kiriel looked at the seven mountains—the Haetara—that had risen out from the ground and said: “...Were they devouring the energy of the crystal all this time to become that strong?”

Hansoo nodded.

The controller.

Named, External Flame Divine Tool.

The object that controlled the power of the flame and turned this giant area into the Flameless Land.

The reason why one couldn't use the power of the Flame within the area of the controller wasn't because it suppressed the power of the Flame.

Rather, it absorbed it all.

The crystal that had devoured the power of the Flame up until this point.

Of course, the Haetara, who devoured energy, were drawn to it in a frenzy.

The strands of shadows worked as tubes to suck the energy out from the crystal.

They were like caterpillars inside cocoons preparing to become butterflies.

But if their source of food disappeared—
—they would go berserk.

Until they found a new source of energy...
They would crush everything in their path.

Kiriel bit her fingernails as she mumbled:
“If they find a source, it’ll be a problem... If they don't, it’ll still be a problem...”

Hansoo nodded.
These things had eaten the energy of the Flame; it was clear where they would towards next.

‘If they find the source of the Flame...’
It would all be over.

Roaaaar!
Hansoo spoke to Kiriel:
“I...I’ll be back. Move away, so you don’t get swept by this.”
“Where are you going?”

Hansoo mumbled as he gazed into the distance: “I... need to retrieve something stolen.”

.....

“Ha... What a scene.”

The Nerpa looked at the giant creatures in the distance and muttered.

Since such things had risen, this giant planet would now go through a cleansing.

In a very fair manner.

‘But... what to do?’

He really needed this crystal.

It was now time to head to the next location.

‘Back to the Kalkuroun Fleet.’

But as the Nerpa was about to go aboard his transportational device—

—whooosh!—

—the sound of something cutting through the air reverberated behind him.

And as the Nerpa frowned and dodged to the side—

—boom!—

—the Mjolnir, that had grazed his side, smashed apart his transportational device.

“Ha... You just won’t leave me alone, huh?”

“You’re planning to run away after causing such a scene?”

Hansoo chuckled coldly as he looked at the Nerpa.

Chapter 397: Continental War (1)

Roaaarr!

Erunheim clenched her teeth as she looked at the giant monsters in the distance.

‘How... what...’

Chaos.

—boom!—

—boooom!—

Each step destroyed countless structures below as the earth shook.

In a single day, the cities that the people of Reunion had worked so hard to build had all been crushed.

Countless screams of people could be heard from all around.

“Ahhh!”

“Move away from its path! Move!”

“...What about our homes? Our weaponry?”

One of the men evacuating the people shouted out in rage.

“Is that really important?! Focus on saving your life!”

‘Damn... If only we could use the power of the Flame!’

Although they could usually live with just their mechanical tools...

They started to really miss the power of the Flame after being struck with a catastrophe like this.

The one leading the evacuation was wearing Dragon God Armor, and he stomped the ground in rage.

“Ahhh!”

But then—

—something unexpected happened.

—boom!—

With a huge sound, the land beneath him cracked apart.

“Wha... Huh?”

As he looked at this in a daze—

—kiiiiing!—

—the Dragon God Armor let out bright red lights alongside vents of steam.

The Dragon God Armor’s engine, which used the power of the Flame, reactivated.

‘Could it be...?!’

Erunheim and the man looked at the armor in shock.

‘We can use the power of the Flame.’

The strange energy that protected and suppressed them had disappeared.

But the first thing to appear in Erunheim’s head was fear.

The fence that protected them from the outside had disappeared.

There was no longer a place where they could hide from the Neropa Union or the Pompeion Empire.

But Erunheim decided to push back these thoughts for this moment.

‘I don’t have time to worry about such a thing.’

Even if the Empire or the Union didn’t do anything, this was no longer a place where people could live in.

And even at this exact moment—

—kuoooo!—

—seven giant mountain-sized monsters were crushing apart the territory of Reunion and heading out in multiple directions.

They didn't know what their goals were.

But there was only one thing they needed to do right now.

Getting as far away as they could from those things.

“Run towards the ships in the outskirts!”

“Hurry! Everybody evacuate!”

The man and Erunheim started to shout.

.....

—oooooong!—

The Nerpa smiled as he looked at the ships floating up all around him.

“They can use them since the controller isn't there anymore.”

The Nerpa muttered as he looked at the ships using the Flame's power to fly.

Since he had taken the controller away, those ships were usable again.

Although most of them had been damaged or destroyed, they could still escape this place with them.

‘The issue is this place.’

The Nerpa thought as he looked at Hansoo standing before him, equipped with his own blue armor and wielding a strange hammer.

“I don't know what your thoughts are, but... I truly need this. To revive my race.”

Out there in the vast space.

Even he didn't know what had happened to his race that called multiple planets their home.

His race might have even moved on to other unknown planets.

But since he had now lost the Nelkipa.

He had to assume that his race had been annihilated and had to start anew in this place.

And to do that...

He needed enough strength that could then become the seed of their race's revival.

'Reviving one's race... Quite similar.'

Hansoo smirked.

"Sorry, but I also need that."

Hansoo looked at the ships rising up in the distance as he spoke.

The giant ships that were visible to an average person's eyes despite being thousands of kilometers away.

Despite the distance, one could still feel the vibrations within the air from their movements.

But whether they had noticed the change in this place and started to move...

Or were moving to kill the now awakened monsters...

He didn't know why they were all rising up into the air, but he knew one thing for sure.

That he needed the crystal to go against them.

The Nerpa pondered for a moment and suggested: "How about this—let's form an alliance for now. We do not need to fight each other. Our opponents are the Pompeion Empire and the Neropa Union, right? If we fight together, then we can deal with them with much more ease."

He needed to gather three controllers.

Even if Hansoo didn't exist, there were countless other obstacles.

And it was hard to use the crystal's full strength at this moment

as well.

There was no point in fighting each other.

Hansoo thought for a moment but then nodded.

“Not a bad plan.”

“Good. Then...”

But as the Nerpa spoke with a bright expression—
—Hansoo added a few extra words.

“But I will look after the crystal.”

The Nerpa frowned at this.

“Can you not trust me?”

Their race held promises and honor very highly.

His words were basically saying that he did not trust him, so he wanted to hold onto the item of importance.

Hansoo smirked as he replied:

“Can you trust me?”

“...”

“What will you do if I decide to betray you at a crucial moment while holding onto that?”

The Nerpa pondered for a moment and shook his head.

“You won’t.”

He could actually see another person’s soul to a degree.

This man’s soul was rough, cracked in multiple places, and distorted in one place.

But it was still letting out a pure light.

It was a soul that only someone who still retained themselves could have, despite receiving and giving countless injuries.

Someone like this did not lie or betray easily.

Since they worked for the greater picture and not for their own benefit.

Hansoo chuckled.

“What if I have to betray you to save my race? What do you think I will do?”

“...”

“In another way, what if you had to betray me to achieve your goals... What will you do?”

The Nerpa’s expression turned sour, and Hansoo continued to speak.

“We have too much on our shoulders to put our trust in each other, right?”

They were in a situation where they had to work for the survivability of their respective races.

They were just like each other.

Friendships and trust were nothing before the weight they bore on their shoulders.

The worst-case scenario.

If they had to give up their allies to achieve their goals.

If they had to betray their allies and attack them from the back to save their race.

What would he and the Nerpa choose?

And they knew that such a situation would come sooner or later.

‘The Nerpa’s race... Their scale is too large.’

They would have a goal that would fit their scale.

Which meant that the <Flame> would not be enough.

At least, not for both races.

The Nerpa grinded his teeth as he shouted: “Extreme... you are

too extreme! You are planning to make an enemy out of me because of an unknown future? Me that could be of great strength to you? I thought you were a great person, but you're just a coward!"

Hansoo spoke coldly:

"That's the issue."

People who can greatly contribute to one's strength...

They would become great enemies the moment one's back was turned.

"Maybe if you and I both had a few things to lose, but... we have nothing to lose".

They only had their bodies.

They had no race to save, no hostages to rescue.

Nothing.

<Do not trust anyone... that has nothing to lose. You never know what they will do.> Hansoo thought of Keldian's words and tightly clenched his hammer.

'Maybe... I am a coward.'

His enemy was too great.

He could not allow the item that could become the largest variable remain in the hands of the person that could become the largest variable.

He needed to kill the Nerpa when he was still weak.

And as if the Nerpa had read Hansoo's thoughts, his expression turned cold.

"It seems you are underestimating me, but... sure. Let's have a go at it."

His choice to fight Hansoo wasn't because Hansoo was going against him.

There was always the choice of running away.

But as he heard Hansoo's words...

He had to admit the feeling he'd been burying inside him.

If both races were after the Flame's strength, they would collide sooner or later.

And to prevent that collision, he needed to get rid of Hansoo.

He had clearly seen the alien race's terrifying potential for growth.

And the man before him was a person at the epitome of that race.

'I... will uproot you here.'

If not then he would return in the future with much more power.

And then—

—rumble!—

—with its limitations removed, the power of the Flame started to rise up from the Nerpa's soul, who had the rights to control such power.

—oooong!—

Buried deep within the planet, the Flame's core trembled as it supplied the Nerpa with a large amount of power.

And the strength that crushed Kiriel started to surround the Nerpa's body.

Then—

—boooooom!—

—a huge collision exploded between Hansoo and the Nerpa.

.....

—rumble—

Inside Erunheim's ship.

Somebody was standing next to Erunheim with a blade.

“Ugh...”

Erunheim gritted her teeth.

Although the power of the Flame had returned, she could not deal with this woman.

After all, this woman was a monster that the Dragon God Armor couldn't deal with.

‘We should’ve... stopped her before she got on the ship.’

Then with the ship's strength, they could've stopped her to some degree.

But Kiriel did not care for her thoughts, mumbling while looking at the scene of the collision.

“It really seems that... Hansoo cannot trust anybody.”

Erunheim replied as she stared at the fight in the far distance.

“...Don't you feel uneasy at all? You could also end up thrown to the side.”

Kiriel replied to the smirking Erunheim:

“I... don't like a leader who can trust everyone.”

Even more so if their stakes were this high.

A person suspicious of everyone was much better than a person who trusted everyone.

“And there's nothing about me that would make him throw me away. Look how hardworking I am.”

Kiriel shrugged as she said:

“So hurry and fire. Quickly.”

Kiriel pointed towards the Nerpa radiating a powerful aura in the distance, a cold smile on her face.

Chapter 398: Continental War (2)

—boooooom!—

Hansoo whistled as he looked at the power of the Flames.

‘Amazing.’

A power that the natives of Angkara had to pour every bit of their effort to use.

But this man was covered from head to toe with this power.

In a much more efficient manner too.

—boooooom!—

Hansoo blocked the energy charging towards him with his armor and swung his hammer towards the opponent.

And as the Nerpa saw this, he twisted his fingers in a weird angle.

Then—

—a giant barrier made of condensed mana appeared next to him.

—booooooom!—

The collision between the hammer and the barrier created a tremendous shockwave.

Hansoo, who had been flung away from the rebound force, stood up and shrugged his shoulders.

‘His control over mana is something else.’

The Nerpa didn’t seem that proficient in a battle.

But he had an absurd amount of strength that could easily fill up his lack of combat proficiency.

It was like attacking a mountain.

Of course, for Hansoo, who could easily blow away a mountain, the Nerpa really was very strong.

Hansoo touched his tingly wrists.

—boooooom!—

The forces of Reunion.

The ship led by the nation of kaeluman, led by Eruinheim, the Arkreim.

The Nerpa scoffed at the attack beam which could easily wipe away an entire city.

“Pieces of scum.”

—kuoooooooo!—

The attack beam suddenly trembled intensely and soon dispersed into countless tiny rays.

And by the time the attack reached the Nerpa, it had lost all its strength and breezed past him and Hansoo.

The Nerpa looked at Hansoo with a cold gaze.

“I’ll make you regret it. All of it.”

—boooooom!—

A huge sound reverberated from beneath the Nerpa’s feet.

A sound so loud that even those in the middle of running away turned to look at the source.

“Oh my god...”

“Run! Run away!”

Everybody freaked out when they saw a giant pillar of flames that resembled a volcano’s eruption.

It was like a giant red dragon ascending into the heavens.

—rumble—

The Nerpa grasped onto the power of the Flame that had risen from the ground beneath and smiled at Hansoo.

“Catch.”

—whoooosh!—

The Nerpa’s hands had created a red orb.

Seven beams of light exploded out from the orb and shot towards Hansoo.

Like a burst of light from a sun.

Despite being made from one’s hands, its strength was countless times stronger than the attack made from the Arkreim.

Hansoo started to prepare himself when he saw this.

—kudududuk—

He exerted pressure on his entire body.

The survival instincts he squeezed out from this turned into a destructive force and then gathered around his hammer.

Hansoo felt the raised mastery level of the Nine Dragons Strike and then smashed his hammer towards the beams of light that were flying towards him.

—boom!—

The two powers collided and shook the heavens and earth around them.

—whoooosh!—

The blue armor tried its best to resist the surrounding flames as it sucked Hansoo’s energy at a quickened rate.

But despite this—

—kakakakak!—

—countless cracks appeared on the blue armor as flames entered through those gaps and melted his skin.

‘It seems I’ll reach the 4th level soon. They really given me no time to take a break...’

The Nerpa looked at Hansoo with a cold gaze and said: “Are you regretting it yet?”

Hansoo shrugged his shoulders and pointed behind the Nerpa.

“Behind you.”

“What a petty tric—”

Why would he fall for such a dumb trick?

As the Nerpa scoffed—

—whooosh!—

—the sound of something huge cutting through the air whistled behind him.

The sound of a giant piece of metal flying at a tremendous speed.

The Nerpa frowned and turned around.

“...You really have all sorts of tricks up your sleeves, huh?”

The Nerpa’s frown deepened.

The Arkreim.

The ship was now charging straight towards the Nerpa.

‘Since the Flame doesn’t work... How unsophisticated.’

It was stupid, but effective.

Even he couldn’t easily stop an engine that ran on the Flame’s power.

But he could just dodge it.

As the Nerpa was about to move—

“It really seems like you aren’t used to fights.”

—boom!—

—Hansoo spoke a few brief words as he charged towards the Nerpa.

‘Tsk.’

The Nerpa looked at Hansoo who was trying to corner him in place.

“You dumb bastard... You’ll get swept away too!”

The giant ship would not be able to discern between friend and foe due to its size.

But Hansoo smiled and swung his right arm.

“Whatever.”

The Nerpa breathed in as he saw the hammer approaching him and then blew up the red orb in his hand.

—boooooom!—

A red light extended out with his body as the center, as if he was creating a miniature sun around his body.

And behind this explosion, a giant ship was flying towards him while Hansoo was charging at him from the front.

“Haaaaap!”

As the Nerpa shouted—

—boooooom!—

—the giant ship, Hansoom and the Nerpa were all swept away by a miniature supernova.

“Ahhhh!”

“Kuaaaa!”

Everyone above the ship started to scream.

This giant ship had smashed into two small beings.

But they were the ones screaming, the people above the Arkreim.

—kakakakakaka!—

The shields shattered in an instant as the engines overloaded.

The immensely powerful alloy walls of the ship broke apart in an

instant as the flames of the explosion melted everything within.

‘What in the world...’

Erunheim was at a loss at this scene.

She thought that she would be able to solve this issue as long as she started up the ship.

But the scene before her eyes was far beyond anything she could imagine.

Taking into account the ship’s mass, they should easily be able to run over two tiny humans no matter how strong they were.

But as if the ship had crashed into a giant mountain, it had ended up ripped apart by the two beings in front of it.

‘To die like this...’

As Erunheim closed her eyes at the flames approaching her.

“Hey, now. I’m not THAT petty, you know.”

“Wha...”

—SSSSS—

Someone appeared by Erunheim and covered her body with a mass of white clouds.

Erunheim opened her eyes...

And saw the ship, which she had just been standing on, crashing down in the far distance.

‘When did we...’

As she looked around, she could see all the passengers above the ship, all of them gasping for breath.

‘...I really cannot see through them.’

Everything from their abilities to their goals.

As Erunheim looked at Kiriel with a strange expression—
“Damn... He really is a cockroach.”

—Kiriell frowned as she looked at the scene through the rubble of the falling ship.

.....

—rumble—

Through the half-melted and crushed apart rubble of the ship.

The Nerpa, who was flying in the air , cracked his fingers and smiled.

“This is nothing...”

But unlike his words, the Nerpa’s condition wasn’t at its greatest.

Countless parts of his body had melted and his right arm was broken.

But there was a reason why he was smiling.

Because his opponent had suffered more.

The blue armor that was barely maintaining its shape, and the body of Hansoo burning inside it.

“So... have your thoughts changed?”

While listening to the mocking tone of the Nerpa, Hansoo replied: “Why aren’t you using the crystal?”

“Huh?”

Hansoo looked at the Nerpa and repeated himself.

“The crystal in your hand, why aren’t you using it?”

The Nerpa scoffed.

“That’s because I don’t need—”

“Not yet?”

As Hansoo asked...

The Nerpa’s expression froze.

It was if Hansoo knew about the controller more than himself.

And at that moment, a line of thought appeared inside his mind.

‘Right... why didn’t I use it?’

The Nerpa thought as he looked at the Crystal in his left hand.

He wasn’t in the greatest of conditions anyway.

If his strength had been slightly lacking then he’d be the one falling to the ground and not the ship.

But then—

‘Ugh...’

—the Nerpa suddenly had a headache.

And a dull voice called out.

“So you’re a fake...”

“What?”

As the Nerpa looked at Hansoo—

‘Shit...’

—chills ran down his entire back.

His opponent, who was dying before his eyes, had disappeared in that small time frame he was looking at the crystal.

Then—

—boom!—

—the Nerpa felt a tremendous aura behind him.

—chop—

“Aaahhh!”

The Nerpa was flung away as he grasped onto his left wrist.

One strike.

His weak body had been turned into trash from one attack.

‘This is not an item a fake should be holding.’

Hansoo grabbed the crystal that had been released from the Nerpa's hand, looking at the Nerpa embedded in the ground beneath him.

Chapter 399: Continental War (3)

—rummmble—

The Haetara made a strange expression as it moved.

Just up until this exact moment, there was the aura of a delicious meal in the location it was heading to.

An aura of a meal that would allow it to far surpass its siblings.

But the aura had suddenly disappeared.

—rummble—

The Haetara pondered for a moment and then stopped heading forward and turned around instead.

—boom! boom!—

Because of its sheer mountainous size, just a simple turn caused giant dust clouds to form around it.

And there was a very dissatisfied expression on the Haetara's face.

It had almost reached it, but for it to suddenly disappear...

But there was no time to sulk over this matter.

Since its siblings were already far ahead of itself, moving toward other sources of food.

Although there were a few flies clad in steel armor that also aroused their hunger, these little things were nowhere close to being able to satisfy them.

Instead of wasting time on these little things, they needed to move.

In search for that one large chunk of meat that could fill up its stomach.

—boom! boom!—

The Haetara turned around and then started to proceed towards the far distance that radiated another delicious aura.

And in the location the Haetara had previously headed to...

‘Good, I’ve stopped it before things got more annoying.’

Hansoo mumbled in annoyance and then started to descend.

Towards the Nerpa who had attracted the Haetara with its tremendous energy but was now laid out on the floor, powerless.

.....

“Ughhh... Kuhuk.”

The Nerpa puked out blood.

One strike.

It only took one strike to destroy this weak body currently under its control.

Even if the body had the power of his soul, it was useless.

Since the moment he started using it, what was left of his weak body would start to disintegrate.

‘Damn...’

The Nerpa looked despairingly at Hansoo who was descending from the sky and then glanced at the crystal in Hansoo’s hand.

And at that moment, Hansoo’s words flashed by.

‘I’m... a fake?’

This being the reason why he could not use the controller.

But the Nerpa denied this.

‘No. How can I be fake?’

Then, what were these memories in his head?

From waking up from the crystal to having his body stolen by Melchizedek.

And stealing the body of N-Aroel who was nearby.

It remembered everything.

Even his goal of saving his race and achieving glory.

But at that moment—

—pain.

The Neropa's expression turned grim.

And it wasn't from a headache or the pain from the injuries on his body.

But because of one thing.

'...I can't remember.'

When it tried to think of its past memories, the clear memories started to blur and he started to slowly forget them one by one.

As if he was someone who had simply passed by, picking up things other people had talked about.

If those memories were truly his, then something like this shouldn't be happening.

'What the hell... What's going on?'

While the Nerpa was raking through his memories— You have failed.

—he heard a very familiar voice inside his head.

And the moment he heard this...

Chills ran down the Nerpa's entire back.

He knew this voice.

This voice.

It was his own.

Of course, he couldn't think for long.

The moment he heard this voice, his consciousness quickly came

to a halt.

Every thought process stopped and his memories were erased.

The Nerpa understood what was happening as he fell into despair.

‘Damn...’

And with this word as his final thought.

—thud—

The body of N-Aroel that the Nerpa had controlled weakly slumped down onto the ground.

.....

—rummble—

His body stopped moving.

—ssss—

Overloaded from the Flame’s powers, N-Aroel’s body could not withstand the energy coursing through it uncontrollably and soon disintegrated.

—tatak!—

Kiriell landed next to Hansoo and then looked at N-Aroel with a frown.

“Damn...”

‘I can’t read anything like this...’

She needed at least a small remainder to read a body’s memories.

But since there was nothing left, there was no way she could read any memories.

—kiiiing!—

She placed her hand on the ground to test it out, but couldn’t read anything.

‘He looked like he had a lot of information we could dig out... Damn.’

Although she hadn’t participated in the battle, she had witnessed it from afar.

The moment Hansoo said he was fake.

The Nerpa had flinched and Hansoo used that opening to send a fatal strike.

She had run over because of her curiosity, but for the Nerpa to have become like this...

‘Shall I ask?’

As Kiriel was about to ask—

—Hansoo turned to her and spoke first.

“Let’s move.”

“Huh? Where?”

Hansoo glanced at the crystal in his hand and then said: “Towards the location of the second object.”

The closest location was the Neropa Union.

It wouldn’t be hard to go there.

Within Erunheim’s memories that Kiriel read, there were clear memories of the Neropa union.

“Where?”

Hansoo replied.

Neoreim.

Neropa Union’s capital city.

A core city inhabited by a hundred million civilians.

Kiriel raked through her memories relating this giant city and then muttered: “...It won’t be easy.”

The Neoreim existed within Erunheim's memories.

Since everyone under the Neropa Union would have been to the capital city, Neoreim.

But there were two reasons she said this.

First.

Neoreim was too far for them to reach with her Cloudy Movement.

Of course, this wasn't such a huge issue.

Since they could reach the city by using her skill multiple times or just run over there.

They were Transcendents after all.

But the main issue was the second problem.

'Damn.'

Kiriel's expression turned pale as she thought of the Neoreim.

Countless mechanical soldiers and Dragon God Soldiers.

Thousands of ships flying through the sky.

She had realized it on the Arkreim just a moment ago but the power of these ships was far above that of the Dragon God Soldiers.

According to Erunheim's memories, the ships that were either at K-Level or above were especially hard to deal with.

And hundreds of such powerful ships were in the air, so of course things would not be easy for them.

Of course, the ships wouldn't turn their own city into a sea of flames.

'And it seems like they know about us now too.'

Kiriel looked towards the distance at the ships that had stopped approaching them.

The giant ships that were clearly visible despite being hundreds of kilometers away.

Of course with their technology, they would've seen what had just happened here.

If they started to set up their defenses, it would be almost impossible to breach them.

But Hansoo shook his head.

“It won’t be that bad.”

“...How?”

Hansoo continued.

“They... won’t have the time to care about us anymore.”

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

The slowly moving mountain-sized creatures.

The Haetara that continuously searched for food.

They had already moved far out.

‘They would be of help, at least for now.’

Their strength was not something that even he could deal with, at least not yet.

Although he would need to deal with the Haetara eventually, they would help him out for now.

Because if those things went berserk... his opponents were the ones that would lose much more than himself.

Hansoo thought as he watched the giant creatures that had already moved past the Flameless Land and were proceeding further.

.....

—booooooom!—

“F***! Block it! Blow it apart!”

In the distance.

The commander of the Akaroun Fleet, R-Aeuran Ron, shouted as he watched the giant beasts wreaking havoc beneath him.

And the Technorat, N-Kadiak, made a hesitant expression at these commands.

“But... beneath us...”

He couldn’t finish.

The location that giant creature was stomping on was one of the Neropa’s Union three main defensive cities.

It was the largest city out of the ones that the Ron family controlled, a city located at the very outskirts of the Neropa Union, the first line of defense that guarded against the Pompeion Empire.

If they attacked, it would sweep away their entire city as well.

R-Aeuran Ron shouted with rage.

“Do you think I don’t know about that? Just blast it! It’ll all be over once they’re dead! Fire!”

R-Aeuran Ron pointed to the location the beasts were heading to.

Great Furnace.

A structure that was only built on giant or defensive cities that held the power of the Flame. The structure drew out this power from inside the planet and used it to supply their soldiers and weapons.

The Alpha and Omega that fueled the Neropa Union.

They were only nine of these in the entire Neropa Union as well.

This meant that if at least one of them ended up smashed apart, a large chunk of the Union’s strength would be lost.

Sadly, R-Aeuran Ron’s shouts were in vain.

Guoooooo!

—chomp!—

—chompchomp!—

The beast ignored their attacks as it headed straight into the Great Furnace, slammed its head inside and started to devour it.

—kiiiiing—

The attacks from the surrounding ships and the city's defensive weapons weakened at a visible rate.

With the severing of the Flame's power, the army that moved using this power began to stop as well.

And it was the same for R-Aeuran Ron's fleet.

—kiiiiing—

Amidst the sounds of the engines weakening— —R-Aeuran Ron wasn't looking at the beast but rather in the opposite direction.

“Damn... Report it. They've started their attack.”

The beast wasn't the only issue.

This next opponent was an existence that they'd despised for so long.

The reason for this city's existence.

‘War... This is war. Damn. So sudden.’

As the strength behind the city came to a halt.

—rummble!—

The Pompeion Empire's great fleets that were scouting in the distance started to head towards this city.

R-Aeuran Ron gritted his teeth.

Chapter 400: Guerrilla Warfare (1)

‘Where did these monsters jump out from...?’

A woman frowned as she received a report from a ship.

But she wasn’t actually frowning at the monsters but rather at the ones that went to war the moment a chance sprang up.

“Pompeion, that crazy bastard.”

Inside a decorative office, surrounded by twenty Dragon God Soldiers guarding her, a woman sat in a chair as she gritted her teeth.

K-Adelaia Ron.

A title that only one person in a family can hold.

The woman with the ‘K’ title, held only by three people within the entire Neropa Union, frowned as she read through the endless reports that were being sent her way.

The seven monsters that popped out from the land where the defeated had gathered at.

They were the spark that caused the sea of flames that was raging through the lands right now.

A hologram in front of K-Adelaia Ron spoke with an amused expression.

well, it's not all bad for our side either

K-Ukatan Pael.

The patriarch of the Pael family that ruled over the giant territory in the west.

K-Adelaia Ron frowned at his words.

Of course, he didn’t care so much since he didn’t need to defend from his side.

The monsters hadn't gone towards Ukatan's city but rather the Pompeion Empire's.

His fleet was probably planning to demolish the Pompeion city that was currently being crushed under the monster's feet.

Another hologram next to K-Ukatan Pael chuckled as he spoke.

Go ahead. Try to defeat Pompeion all by yourself while we get destroyed.

K-Ukatan Pael shrugged his shoulders at the negative tone that was coming out from the mouth of K-Merrow Nell, the patriarch of the Nell family.

Don't worry, I'll provide aid to you right after i blow this city apart.

K-Merrow Nell continued to frown but soon sighed.

It was not a wrong decision.

They needed to destroy at least one city to have some breathing room against Pompeion.

K-Adelaia Ron then said:

"That's not the main issue, we need to deal with the most basic problem first."

Kuoooo!

K-Adelaia Ron thought as she looked towards the mythical creatures.

'Where in the world...'

Of course, the monsters weren't the only things on the screen.

Around the monsters themselves...

Dammit! Block it!

—boom!—

—boooooom!—

A fleet of warships was attacking the giant creature in front of it.
Sadly, their efforts seemed futile.

Kuooo!

It looked like the attacks had damaged the monster but the rate it was healing at was much faster than the rate of damage.

Healing with the energy from the Great Furnace.

No, it wasn't just healing.

'It's even getting bigger.'

K-Ukatan Pael looked at K-Adelaia Ron who was staring at the monster that was becoming larger and larger, saying: That's not the only issue. You heard it as well, right? One of the relics have gone to their hands.

K-Adelaia Ron felt a headache.

Catastrophes were flying over in bulk quantities.

The Neropa Union, who should've only had a bright future of expanding their territory, was suddenly faced with countless dangers.

But K-Adelaia Ron knew.

That all these incidents were linked.

The alien that took over a relic.

The giant monsters that appeared out of thin air and were now shaking the entire planet.

The Pompeion Empire's invasion.

These were all caused by those aliens.

And the person who caused all of this was...

'This man.'

—tirik!—

K-Adelaia Ron looked at the changed image in the screen before her.

A couple who was standing right in the center of their highly advanced satellite camera.

K-Adelaia Ron saw the blue-armored man holding a hammer, and the woman who was standing very close to him.

Of course, the issue with these two was miniscule when compared to what was going to happen in a bit.

But she didn't feel comfortable leaving these two alone.

K-Adelaia Ron smiled as she said:

“Well, we know who'll be able to deal with them. Family matters should stay within the family, right?”

K-Adelaia Ron switched off the communication panel.

She didn't know where that man was heading to.

But it didn't matter.

Maybe if they were hiding inside the trash dump where the power of the Flame was sealed, they would be safe, but...

The moment they came out, they won't be able to escape her eyes.

‘Do you think you'll be able to escape?’

K-Adelaia Ron chuckled as she looked at the face of Hansoo on the screen.

.....

—rumble—

In the land where the monsters have stomped through.

Thousands of people had gathered.

‘Haa... We have to move.’

Erunheim, who had gathered all the remaining survivors, looked

towards Hansoo in the distance.

The relic wasn't here and the fence that was protecting them had disappeared as well.

Although they could use the power of the Flame...

She could feel her confidence shredding apart as she looked at the battle between the Pompeion Empire and the Neropa Union.

The sky was collapsing as the earth was flipped upside down.

The ship that they were on seemed nothing more than a small cargo ship in comparison to the ships in the distance.

She was in disbelief.

'No way... Their technology has advanced this far already?'

She was at a loss.

It had only been two years.

The level of technology between them hadn't been that different back then.

They were just much weaker in terms of the number of resources they had.

But those ships in the distance.

They were at least a whole generation ahead of them.

And it had only been two years.

'...What happened? Weird.'

Erunheim gritted her teeth as she looked towards the ships in the distance.

A whole generation of differences meant that at least 90% of their weapons were nothing more than scrap metal.

Their opponent would be able to attack normally but their own gear wouldn't allow them to attack their enemies as freely.

It would be a massacre.

And as she thought up to this point—

—Erunheim stood up and walked towards Hansoo who was talking in the distance.

‘He... He might know something.’

He was acting so confidently while everyone else was crying in despair.

This was more than enough to stand out in this crowd “Do you have a plan? Or anything we can do to help...”

John Stone spoke out from nearby.

“Damn... What can we do? Our amazing Kang Hansoo will solve everything! Killing monsters! Crushing ships!”

John Stone lay down on the floor while yelling sarcastically.

‘F*** it. F*** everything. I’m just going to go up.’

His original plan of trying to go against monsters like Hansoo was flawed from the get-go.

He should have just gone up to work under somebody right from the beginning.

Hansoo, who had been looking up into the sky, turned towards John Stone and smiled coldly.

“No, there is a lot you can do. A lot.”

“...?”

John Stone felt shivers run down his back as he saw both Hansoo’s cold smile and Kiriel’s look of pity.

.....

“We’ve caught them”

“Good.”

R-Eronia Nell, who had been assigned to the rats, smiled.

He had long felt pissed off due to the fact that he was assigned to

dealing with rats instead of fighting the Pompeion Empire.

Even more so since he, an R-level, was being watched over like the rats he was trying to catch.

Do not act on your own... just report their location.

‘Damn...’

If he could deal with them himself then at least he wouldn’t be this pissed.

R-Eronia Nell decided to hurry and finish this mission, and he asked the Technorats: “Where is it?”

One of the Technorats scanning the entire planet with the satellites replied: “The 14th City. Etoeim.”

—chiiiing!—

A scene appeared on the panel before them that displayed an area near the factories on the outskirts of Etoeim.

Showing the alien pair who were covered in a dark cloth.

‘Amazing... How did they activate the Quantum Transmission with just their bodies?’

R-Eronia Nell shrugged his shoulders as he looked at the pair who were walking out from a cloud of white smoke.

He didn’t have to deal with them anyway.

‘Not a bad choice but... still.’

R-Eronia Nell chuckled.

Although this was the original territory of the Kalkata tribe who eventually ran off to the trash dump, it was still one of the four cities that was protecting a Great Furnace.

If they took that city down then it would be a huge blow as well.

They had expected those two to do something great but for them to be aiming for such a small goal...

R-Eronia Nell scoffed at the Nell family's leader who had ordered him to watch over these two.

‘Well, it’s good for me since my job is done.’

“Send the report, tell them to activate the Quantum Transmission towards Etoeim as well.”

But then—

—countless voices started to speak out.

“...12th City outskirts, three aliens have been located.”

“The Capital, Neoreim. Aliens have appeared in seven locations all at the same time.”

“A total of 181 aliens are heading towards the nearby 54 cities within the Reunion territory.”

“Damn... This location. 2nd City. Three aliens are heading towards this location! Hurry and prepare the Dragon God Soldiers!”

Dozens of panels started to appear before them.

Hundreds of aliens covered in dark clothes and powerful auras appeared.

No, they hadn’t just appeared.

—boooooom!—

—boom!—

Waaaah!

What the hell! Where did they appear from?!

As he watched them begin their attack—

—R-Eronia Nell felt something snap inside his head.

“These rats... Wait. What about that guy? The guy with the blue armor?”

“He cannot be scanned. Due to the countless auras exploding

out...”

As he heard the flustered Technorat’s report—

“Ahhhh!”

—boom!—

—R-Eronia Nell stood up and slammed his fists on the panels and roared towards the countless aliens on the screens.